

LUCKY PEER.

BY HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.



HANS ANDERSEN.

I.

IN the principal street there stood a fine old-fashioned house; the wall about the courtyard had bits of glass worked into it, so that when the sun or moon shone, it was as if covered with diamonds. That was a sign of wealth, and there was wealth inside there; folks said that the merchant was a man who could just put away two barrels of gold in his best parlor; yes, could put a heap of gold-pieces, as a savings bank against the future,

outside the door of the room where his little son was born.

This little fellow had arrived in the rich house. There was great joy from cellar up to the garret; and up there, there was still greater joy an hour or two afterward. The warehouseman and his wife lived up there, and here too there entered just then a little son, given by our Lord, brought by the stork, and exhibited by the mother. And here too there was a heap outside the door,

quite accidentally; but it was not a gold-heap—it was a heap of sweepings.

The rich merchant was a very considerate, good man; his wife, delicate and gentle-born, dressed well, was pious, and, besides, was kind and good to the poor. Everybody congratulated these two people on now having a little son, who would grow up, and, like his father, be rich and happy. At the font the little boy was called “FELIX,” which means in Latin “lucky,” and that he was, and his parents still more.

The warehouseman, a right sound fellow, and good to the bottom of his heart, and his wife, an honest and industrious woman, were blessed by all who knew them; how lucky they were at getting their little boy, and he was called “PEER!” *

The boy on the first floor and the boy in the garret each got just as many kisses from his parents, and just as much sunshine from our Lord; but still they were placed a little differently,—one down-stairs, and one up. Peer sat the highest, away up in the garret, and he had his own mother for a nurse; little Felix had a stranger for his nurse, but she was a good and honest girl—you could see that in her character-book. The rich child had a pretty little wagon, and was drawn about by his spruce nurse; the child from the garret was carried in the arms of his own mother, both when he was in his Sunday clothes, and when he had his every-day things on; and he was just as much pleased.

They were both pretty children, they both kept growing, and soon could show with their hands how tall they were, and say single words in their mother tongue. Equally sweet, equally dainty and petted were they both. As they grew up they had a like pleasure out of the merchant's horses and carriages. Felix got permission from his nurse to sit by the coachman and look at the horses; he fancied himself driving. Peer got permission to sit at the garret window and look down into the yard when the master and mistress went out to drive, and when they were fairly gone, he placed two chairs, one in front, the

other behind, up there in the room, and so he drove himself; he was the real coachman—that was a little more than fancying himself to be the coachman.

They had noticed each other, these two, but it was not until they were two years old that they spoke to each other. Felix went elegantly dressed in silk and velvet, with bare knees, after the English style. “The poor child will freeze!” said the family in the garret. Peer had trousers that came down to his ankles, but one day his clothes were torn right across his knees, so that he had as much of a draught, and was just as much undressed as the merchant's little delicate boy. Felix came with his mother and wanted to go out; Peer came with his, and wanted to go in.

“Give little Peer your hand,” said the merchant's lady. “You two can talk to each other.”

And one said “Peer!” and the other said “Felix!” Yes, that was all they said that time.

The rich lady petted her boy, but there was one who petted Peer just as much, and that was his grandmother. She was weak-sighted, and yet she saw much more in little Peer than his father or mother could see; yes, more than anybody at all could discover.

“The dear child,” said she, “is going to get on in the world. He is born with a gold apple in his hand. There is the shining apple!” And she kissed the child's little hand. His parents could see nothing, nor Peer either, but as he grew to know more, no doubt he would find that out too.

“That is such a story, such a real wonder-story, that grandmother tells!” said the parents.

Indeed grandmother could tell stories, and Peer was never tired of hearing always the same ones. She taught him a psalm and to repeat the Lord's Prayer, and he knew it, not as a gabble but as words which meant something; every single petition in it she explained to him. Especially he thought about what grandmother said on the words: “Give us this day our daily bread;” he was to understand that it was necessary for one to get wheat bread, for another to get black bread;

* Peer is a variation of Peter; common in the country: Pete, so to speak.—TRANSLATOR.

one must have a great house when he had a great deal of company ; another, in small circumstances, could live quite as happily in a little room in the garret. "So each person has what he calls 'daily bread.'"

Peer had regularly his good daily bread, and very delightful days, too, but they were not to last always. Stern years of war began ; the young were to go away, the old to stay at home. Peer's father was among those who were enrolled, and soon it was heard that he was one of the first who fell in battle against the victorious enemy.

There was terrible grief in the little room in the garret. The mother cried, the grandmother and little Peer cried ; and every time one of the neighbors came up to see them, they talked about "father," and then they cried all together. The widow, meanwhile, received permission, the first year, to lodge rent free, and afterward she was to pay only a small rent. The grandmother stayed with the mother, who supported herself by washing for several "single fine gentlemen," as she called them. Peer had neither sorrow nor want. He had his fill of meat and drink, and grandmother told him stories so extraordinary and wonderful about the wide world, that he asked her, one day, if they two might not go on Sunday to foreign lands, and come home again as prince and princess, with gold crowns on.

"I am too old for that," said grandmother ; "and you must first learn a terrible lot of things, become great and strong ; but you must always be a good and affectionate child—just as you are now."

Peer rode around the room on hobby-horses ; he had two such ; but the merchant's son had a real live horse ; it was so little that it might as well have been called a baby-horse, as Peer called it, and it never could become any bigger. Felix rode it about in the yard ; he even rode outside the gate with his father and a riding-master from the king's stable. For the first half-hour Peer did not like his horses, and would not ride them—they were not real. He asked his mother why he could not have a real horse like little Felix ; and his mother said :

"Felix lives down on the first floor, close

by the stables, but you live high up, under the roof. One cannot have horses up in the garret except like those you have ; do you ride on them."

And so Peer rode : first to the chest of drawers, the great mountain full of treasures ; both Peer's Sunday clothes and his mother's were there, and there were the shining silver dollars which she laid aside for rent. He rode to the stove, which he called the black bear ; it slept all summer long, but when winter came it must do something : warm the room and cook the meals.

Peer had a godfather who usually came every Sunday in winter and got a good warm dinner. It was rather a coming down for him, said the mother and the grandmother. He had begun as a coachman ; he took to drink and slept at his post, and that neither a soldier nor a coachman may do. Then he became a carter and drove a cart, and sometimes a drosky for gentlefolk ; but now he drove a dirt-cart and went from door to door, swinging his rattle, "snurre-rurre-ud !" and out from all the houses came the girls and housewives with their buckets full, and turned these into the cart : rags and tags, ashes and rubbish were all turned in. One day Peer had come down from the garret, his mother had gone to town, and he stood at the open gate, and there outside was godfather with his cart.

"Will you take a drive?" he asked. Right willingly would Peer, but only as far as the corner. His eyes shone as he sat on the seat alone with godfather and was allowed to hold the whip. Peer drove with real live horses, drove quite to the corner. His mother came along just then ; she looked rather dubious. It was not so grand to her to see her own little son riding on a dirt-cart. He must get down at once. Still she thanked godfather ; but when they reached home she forbade Peer to take that excursion again.

One day he went again down to the gate. There was no godfather there to entice him off for a drive, but there were other allurements : three or four small street urchins were down in the gutter, poking about to see what they could find that had been lost or had hidden itself there. They had often found a button

or a copper coin; but they had quite as often scratched themselves with a broken bottle, or pricked themselves with a pin, which was just now the case. Peer must join them, and when he got down among the gutter-stones he found a silver coin.

Another day he was down on his knees again, digging with the other boys. They only got dirty fingers; he found a gold ring, and showed, with sparkling eyes, his lucky find, and then the others threw dirt at him, and called him Lucky Peer; they would not let him be with them then when they poked in the gutter.

Back of the merchant's yard there was some low ground which was to be filled up for building lots; gravel and ashes were carted and tipped out there. Great heaps lay about. Godfather drove his cart, but Peer was not to drive with him. The street boys dug in the heaps; they dug with a stick and with their bare hands. They were always finding one thing or another which seemed worth picking up. Hither came little Peer. They saw him and cried out:—

"Clear out, Lucky Peer!" And when he came nearer, they flung lumps of dirt at him. One of these struck against his wooden shoe and fell to pieces. Something shining dropped out; Peer took it up; it was a little heart made of amber. He ran home with it. The rest did not notice that even when they threw dirt at him he was a child of luck.

The silver skilling which he had found was laid away in his little savings bank; the ring and the amber heart were shown down stairs to the merchant's wife, because the mother wanted to know if they were among the "things found" that ought to be given notice of to the police.

How the eyes of the merchant's wife shone on seeing the ring! It was no other than her own engagement ring, which she had lost three years before; so long had it lain in the gutter. Peer was well rewarded, and the money rattled in his little box. The amber heart was a cheap thing, the lady said; Peer might just as well keep that. At night the amber heart lay on the bureau, and the grandmother lay in bed.

"Eh! what is it that burns so!" said she.

VOL. I. — 18

"It looks as if some candle were lighted there." She got up to see, and it was the little heart of amber. Ah, the grandmother with her weak eyes often saw more than all others could see. Now she had her private thoughts about this. The next morning she took a small strong ribbon, drew it through the opening at the top of the heart, and put it round her little grandson's neck.

"You must never take it off, except to put a new ribbon into it; and you must not show it either to other boys. If they should take it from you, you would have the stomach-ache!" That was the only dreadful sickness little Peer had thus far known. There was a strange power too in the heart. Grandmother showed him that when she rubbed it with her hand, and a little straw was laid by it, the straw seemed to be alive and sprang to the heart of amber, and would not let it go.

II.

THE merchant's son had a tutor who heard him say his lessons alone, and walked out with him alone. Peer was also to have an education, so he went to school with a great quantity of other boys. They studied together, and that was more delightful than going alone with a tutor. Peer would not change.

He was a lucky Peer, but godfather was also a lucky Peer,* for all he was not called Peer. He won a prize in the lottery, of two hundred rix-dollars, on a ticket which he shared with eleven others. He went at once and bought some better clothes, and he looked very well in them. Luck never comes alone, it always has company, and it did this time. Godfather gave up his dirt-cart and joined the theatre.

"For what in the world," said grandmother, "is he going to the theatre? What does he go as?"

As a machinist. That was a real getting on, and he was now quite another man, and took a wonderful deal of enjoyment in the comedy, which he always saw from the top or from the side. The most charming thing was the ballet, but that indeed gave him the hardest work, and there was always some

* Lucky Peer is a familiar title given to a person in luck, much as we might say a lucky dog.

danger from fire. They danced both in heaven and on earth. That was something for little Peer to see, and one evening when there was to be a dress rehearsal of a new ballet, in which they were all dressed and adorned as in the evening when people pay to see all the fine show, he had permission to bring Peer with him, and put him in a place where he could see the whole.

It was a Scripture ballet—Samson. The Philistines danced about him, and he tumbled the whole house down over them and himself; but there were fire-engines and firemen on hand in case of any accident.

Peer had never seen a comedy, still less a ballet. He put on his Sunday clothes and went with godfather to the theatre. It was just like a great drying-loft, with ever so many curtains and screens, great openings in the floor, lamps and lights. There was a host of nooks and crannies up and down, and people came out from these just as in a great church with its balcony pews.* The floor went down quite steeply, and there Peer was placed, and told to stay there till it was all finished and he was sent for. He had three sandwiches in his pocket, so that he need not starve.

Soon it grew lighter and lighter: there came up in front, just as if straight out of the earth, a number of musicians with both flutes and violins. At the side where Peer sat people came dressed as if they were in the street; but there came also knights with gold helmets, beautiful maidens in gauze and flowers, even angels all in white with wings on their backs. They were placed up and down, on the floor and up in the "balcony pews," to be looked at. They were the whole force of the ballet dancers; but Peer did not know that. He believed they belonged in the fairy tales his grandmother had told him about. Then there came a woman, who was the most beautiful of all, with a gold helmet and spear; she looked out over all the others and sat between an angel and an imp. Ah! how much there was to see, and yet the ballet was not even begun.

* In Denmark, and still more in Norway, one still sees great churches with private boxes for families, so to speak, hung like nests against the wall.

There was a moment of quiet. A man dressed in black moved a little fairy wand over all the musicians, and then they began to play, so that there was a whistling of music, and the wall itself began to rise. One looked out on to a flower-garden, where the sun shone, and all the people danced and leaped. Such a wonderful sight had Peer never imagined. There the soldiers marched, and there was fighting, and there were the guilds and the mighty Samson with his love. But she was as wicked as she was beautiful: she betrayed him. The Philistines plucked his eyes out; he had to grind in the mill and be set up for mockery in the dancing hall; but then he laid hold of the strong pillars which held the roof up, and shook them and the whole house; it fell, and there burst forth wonderful flames of red and green fire.

Peer could have sat there his whole life long and looked on, even if the sandwiches were all eaten—and they were all eaten.

Now here was something to tell about when he got home. He was not to be got off to bed. He stood on one leg and laid the other upon the table—that was what Samson's love and all the other ladies did. He made a treadmill out of grandmother's chair, and upset two chairs and a bolster over himself to show how the dancing-hall came down. He showed this, and he gave it with all the music that belonged to it; there was no talking in the ballet. He sang high and low, with words and without; there was no connection in it; it was just like a whole opera. The most noticeable thing, meanwhile, of all was his beautiful voice, clear as a bell, but no one spoke of that.

Peer was before to have been a grocer's boy, to mind prunes and lump sugar; now he found there was something very much finer, and that was to get into the Samson story and dance in the ballet. There were a great many poor children that went that way, said the grandmother, and became fine and honored people; still no little girl of her family should ever get permission to go that way; a boy—well, he stood more firmly.

Peer had not seen a single one of the little girls fall before the whole house fell, and then they all fell together, he said.

Peer certainly must be a ballet-dancer.

"He gives me no rest!" said his mother. At last, his grandmother promised to take him one day to the ballet-master, who was a fine gentleman, and had his own house, like the merchant. Would Peer ever get to that? Nothing is impossible for our Lord. Peer had a gold apple in his hand when he was a child. Such had lain in his hands; perhaps it was also in his legs.

Peer went to the ballet-master, and knew him at once; it was Samson himself. His eyes had not suffered at all at the hands of the Philistines. That was only a part of the play, he was told. And Samson looked kindly and pleasantly on him, and told him to stand up straight, look right at him, and show him his ankle. Peer showed his whole foot, and leg too.

"So he got a place in the ballet," said grandmother.

It was easily brought about at the ballet-master's house; but first his mother and grandmother must needs make other preparations, and talk with people who knew about these things; first with the merchant's wife, who thought it a good career for a pretty, well-formed boy without any prospect, like Peer. Then they talked with Miss Frandsen; she understood all about the ballet. At one time, in the younger days of grandmother, she had been the most favorite *danseuse* at the theatre; she had danced goddesses and princesses, had been cheered and applauded whenever she came out; but then she grew older,—we all do,—and then she no longer had principal parts; she had to dance behind the younger ones; and finally she went behind all the dancers quite into the dressing-room, where she dressed the others to be goddesses and princesses.

"So it goes!" said Miss Frandsen. "The theatre road is a delightful one to travel, but it is full of thorns. Chicane grows there,—chicane!"

That was a word Peer did not understand; but he came to understand it quite well.

"He is determined to go into the ballet," said his mother.

"He is a pious Christian child, that he is," said grandmother.

"And well brought up," said Miss Frandsen. "Well bred and moral! that was I in my heyday."

And so Peer went to dancing-school, and got some summer clothes and thin-soled dancing-shoes to make it easier. All the old dancers hissed him, and said that he was a boy good enough to eat.

He was told to stand up, stick his legs out, and hold on by a post so as not to fall, while he learned to kick first with his right leg, then with his left. It was not so hard for him as for most of the others. The ballet-master clapped him on the back and said he would soon be in the ballet; he should be a king's child, who was carried on shields and wore a gold crown. That was practised at the dancing school, and rehearsed at the theatre itself.

The mother and grandmother must go to see little Peer in all his glory, and they looked, and they both cried, for all it was so splendid. Peer in all his glory and show had not seen them at all; but the merchant's family he had seen; they sat in the loge nearest the stage. Little Felix was with them in his best clothes. He wore buttoned gloves, just like grown-up gentlemen, and sat with an opera-glass at his eyes the whole evening, although he could see perfectly well—again just like grown-up gentlemen. He looked at Peer; Peer looked at him; and Peer was a king's child with a gold crown on. This evening brought the two children in closer relation to one another.

Some days after, as they met each other in the yard, Felix went up to Peer and told him he had seen him when he was a prince. He knew very well that he was not a prince any longer, but then he had worn a prince's clothes and had a gold crown on.

"I shall wear them again on Sunday," said Peer.

Felix did not see him then, but he thought about it the whole evening. He would have liked very well to be in Peer's shoes; he had not Miss Frandsen's warning that the theatre way was a thorny one, and that *chicane* grew on it; neither did Peer know this yet, but he would very soon learn it.

His young companions the dancing children were not all as good as they ought to be

for all that they sometimes were angels with wings to them. There was a little girl, Malle Knallemp, who always, when she was dressed as page, and Peer was a page, stepped maliciously on the side of his foot, so as to see his stockings; there was a bad boy who always was sticking pins in his back, and one day he ate Peer's sandwiches by mistake; but that was impossible, for Peer had some meat-pie with his sandwich, and the other boy had only bread and butter. He could not have made a mistake.

It would be in vain to recite all the vexations that Peer endured in the two years, and the worst was not yet,—that was to come. There was a ballet to be brought out called *The Vampire*. In it the smallest dancing children were dressed as bats; wore gray tights that fitted snugly to their bodies; black gauze wings were stretched from their shoulders, and so they were to run on tiptoe, as if they were just flying, and then they were to whirl round on the floor. Peer could do this especially well; but his trousers and jacket, all of one piece, were old and worn; the threads did not hold together; so that, just as he whirled round before the eyes of all the people, there was a rip right down his back, straight from his neck down to where the legs are fastened in, and all his short, little white shirt was to be seen.

All the people laughed. Peer saw it, and

knew that he was ripped all down the back; he whirled and whirled, but it grew worse and worse. Folks laughed louder and louder; the other vampires laughed with them, and whirled into him, and all the more dreadfully when the people clapped and shouted bravo!

"That is for the ripped vampire!" said the dancing children; and so they always called him "Ripperip."

Peer cried; Miss Frandsen comforted him. "'Tis only *chicane*," said she; and now Peer knew what *chicane* was.

Besides the dancing-school, they had another one attached to the theatre, where the children were taught to cipher and write, to learn history and geography; ay, they had a teacher in religion, for it is not enough to know how to dance; there is something more in the world than wearing out dancing-shoes. Here, too, Peer was quick,—the very quickest of all,—and got plenty of good marks; but his companions still called him "Ripperip." It was only a joke; but at last he would not stand it any longer, and he struck out and boxed one of the boys, so that he was black and blue under the left eye, and had to have it whitened in the evening when he was to go in the ballet. Peer was talked to sharply by the dancing-master, and more harshly by the sweeping-woman, for it was her son he had punished.

(To be continued.)

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(Continued from page 276.)

III.

A GOOD many thoughts went through little Peer's head, and one Sunday, when he had his best clothes on, he started out without saying a word about it to his mother or grandmother, not even to Miss Frandsen, who always gave him good advice, straight to the chapel-master; he thought this man was the most important one there was outside the ballet. He stepped boldly in and said:—

"I am at the dancing-school, but there is so much *chicane*, and I would much rather be a player or a singer, if you please."

"Have you a voice?" asked the chapel-master, and looked quite pleasantly at him. "Seems to me I know you. Where have I seen you before? Was it not you who was ripped down the back?" and now he laughed. But Peer grew red; he was surely no longer Lucky Peer, as his grandmother had called him. He looked down at his feet and wished himself away.

"Sing me a song!" said the chapel-master. "Nay, cheer up, my lad!" and he tapped him under the chin, and Peer looked up into his kind eyes and sang a song which he had heard at the theatre in the opera "Robert le Diable"—"*Grace à moi.*"

"That is a difficult song, but you make it

go," said the chapel-master. "You have an excellent voice—when it is not ripped in the back!" and he laughed and called his wife. She also must hear Peer sing, and she nodded her head and said something in a foreign tongue. Just at that moment the singing-master of the theatre came in; it was he to whom Peer should have gone if he wanted to get among the singers; now he came of himself, quite accidentally, as it were; he heard him also sing "*Grace à moi,*" but he did not laugh, and he did not look so kindly on him as the chapel-master and his wife; still it was decided that Peer should have singing-lessons.

"Now he has got on the right track," said Miss Frandsen. "One gets along a great deal farther with a voice than with legs. If I had had a voice, I should have been a great songstress, and perhaps a baroness now."

"Or a bookbinder's lady," said mother. "Had you become rich, you would have had the bookbinder any way."

We do not understand that hint; but Miss Frandsen did.

Peer must sing for her, and sing for the merchant's family, when they heard of his new career. He was called in one evening when they had company down-stairs, and he

sang, several songs—for one, "*Grace à moi.*" All the company clapped their hands, and Felix with them; he had heard him sing before; in the stable Peer had sung the entire ballet of Samson, and that was the most delightful of all.

"One cannot sing a ballet," said the lady.

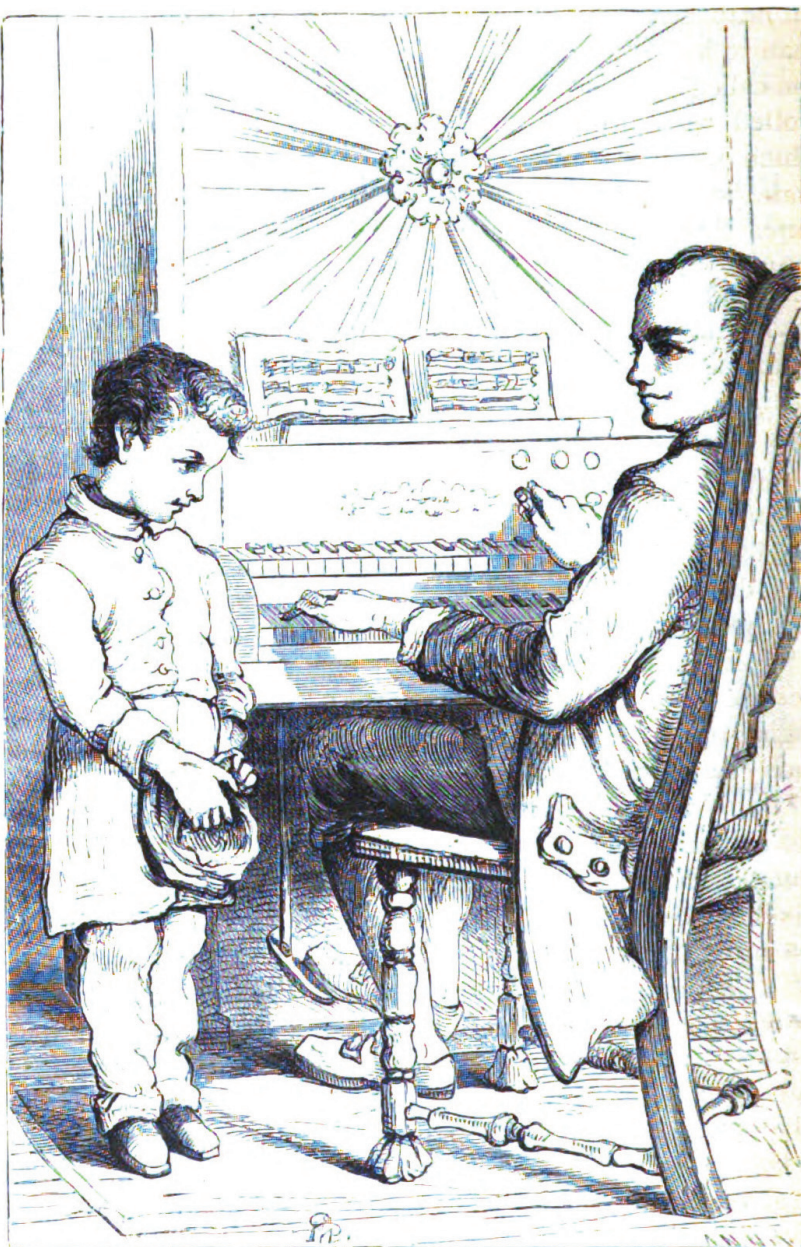
"Yes, Peer could," said Felix, and so he was bidden do it. He sang and he talked, he drummed and hummed; it was child's play, but there came snatches of well-known melodies, which did not give an ill idea of what the ballet meant. All the company found it very entertaining; they laughed and praised it, one louder than another. The merchant's lady gave Peer a great piece of cake and a silver dollar.

How lucky the boy felt, till his eyes rested on a gentleman who stood somewhat back, and looked sternly at him. There was something harsh and severe in the man's black eyes; he did not laugh; he did not speak a single friendly word, and this gentleman was the theatre's singing-master.

Next morning, Peer was to go to him, and he stood there quite as severe-looking as before.

"What possessed you yesterday!" said he. "Could you not understand that they were making a fool of you? Never do that again, and don't you go running about and singing at doors, outside or in. Now you can go. I'll not have any singing with you to-day."

Peer was dreadfully cast down; he had fallen out of the master's good grace. Nevertheless the master was really better satisfied with him than ever before. In all the absurdity which he had scraped together, there was some meaning, something not at all



PEER AND THE CHAPEL-MASTER.

common. The lad had an ear for music, and a voice clear as a bell and of great compass; if it continued like that, then the little man's fortune was made.

Now began the singing-lessons; Peer was industrious and quick. How much there was to learn! how much to know! The mother toiled and slaved that her son might go well dressed and neat, and not look too mean among the people to whose houses he now went. He was always singing and trolling; they had no need at all of a canary-bird, the mother said. Every Sunday must he sing a psalm with his grandmother. It was charming to hear his fresh voice lift itself

up with hers. "It is much more beautiful than to hear him sing wildly;" that was what she called hissing, when, like a little bird, he trolled with his voice, and gave forth tones which seemed to come of themselves, and make such music as they pleased. What tunes there were in his little throat, what sounding music in his little breast! Indeed he could imitate a whole orchestra. There were both flute and bassoon in his voice, violin and bugle. He sang as the birds sing; but man's voice is most charming, even a little man's, when he can sing like Peer.

But in the winter, just as he was to go to the priest to be prepared for confirmation, he caught cold; the little bird in his breast said pip! the voice was ripped like the vampire's back-piece.

"It is no great misfortune," thought mother and grandmother; "now he doesn't go singing tra la, and thus he can think more seriously about his Christianity."

His voice was changing, the singing-master said. Peer must now not sing at all. How long would it be? A year, perhaps two; perhaps the voice would never come again. That was a great grief.

"Think now only of the confirmation," said mother and grandmother. "Apply yourself to music," said the singing-master, "but hold your mouth!"

He thought of his "Christianity," and he studied music. There was singing and playing going on inside him; he wrote entire melodies down in notes, songs without words. Finally he wrote the words, too.

"Really, thou art a poet, little Peer," said the merchant's wife, to whom he carried his text and music. The merchant received a piece of music dedicated to him—a piece without words. Felix also got one, and so did Miss Frandsen, and that went into her album, in which were verses and music by two who were once young lieutenants, but now were old majors on half-pay. The book was given by "a friend," who had himself bound it.

And Peer "stood" at Easter, as they say. Felix presented him with a silver watch. It was the first watch Peer had owned; it seemed to him that he was a man already when he did not need to ask others what o'clock it was.

Felix came up to the garret, congratulated him, and handed him the watch; he himself was not to "stand" until the autumn. They took each other by the hand, these two children of the house, both just the same age, born the same day and in the same house; and Felix ate of the cake which had been baked in the garret on occasion of the confirmation.

"It is a glad day with solemn thoughts," said grandmother.

"Yes, very solemn!" said mother. "Had father only lived to see Peer stand!"

The next Sunday they all three sat at Our Lord's table. As they came from church there came a message from the singing-master, asking Peer to come to him, and Peer went. Some good news awaited him, and yet pretty serious, too. He was to give up singing for a year altogether; his voice was to lie fallow like a field, as a peasant might say; but during that time he was to go to school, not in the capital, where every evening he would be running to the theatre, from which he could not keep away; he was to go thirty miles away from home, to board with a schoolmaster, who kept a lad or two *en pension*. There he was to learn language and science, which would one day be of service to him. The charge for a year's course was three hundred rix-dollars, and that was paid by a "benevolent man who did not wish his name given."

"It is the merchant," said mother and grandmother.

The day of departure came. A good many tears were shed and kisses and blessings given; and then Peer rode thirty miles* on the railway out into the wide world. It was Whitsuntide. The sun shone, the woods were fresh and green; the train went rushing through them. Fields and villages flitted past; gentlemen's country-seats peeped out; the cattle stood on the after-crop pastures. Soon there came a station, then another, market town after market town. At each stopping-place there was a hubbub of people, welcoming or saying good-bye; there was noisy talking outside and in the carriages. Where Peer sat there was a deal of entertainment

* Danish miles.

and chattering by a widow dressed in black. She talked about his grave, his coffin, and his corpse—meaning her child's. It had been such a poor little thing, that there could have been no happiness for it had it lived. It was a great relief for her and the little lamb when it fell asleep.

"I spared no expense in the flowers!" said she; "and you must remember that it died at a very expensive time, when you have to cut the flowers in pots! Every Sunday I went to my grave and laid a wreath on it with great white silk bows; the silk bows were immediately stolen by small girls, and used for dancing bows, they were so attractive. One Sunday when I went there, I knew that my grave was on the left of the principal path, but when I got there, there was my grave on the right. 'How is this?' says I to the gravedigger; 'isn't my grave on the left?'"

"No, it isn't any longer!" said he. "Madam's grave lies there, to be sure, but the mound has been moved over to the right; that place belongs to another man's grave."

"But I will have my corpse in my grave," says I; "and I have a perfect right to say so. Shall I go and dress a false mound, when my corpse lies without any sign on the other side? Indeed I won't!"

"Oh, madam must talk to the dean."

"He is such a good man, that dean! He gave me permission to have my corpse on the right. It would cost five rix-dollars. I gave that with a kiss of my hand, and stood myself by my old grave. 'Can I now be very sure that it is my own coffin and my corpse that is moved?'"

"That madam can!" And so I gave each of the men a piece of money for the moving. But now, since it had cost so much, I thought I ought to send something to make it beautiful, and so I ordered a monument with an inscription. But, will you believe it, when I got it there was a carving of a butterfly at the top. 'Why, that means Frivolity,' said I. 'I won't have that on my grave.'

"It is not Frivolity, madam, it is Immortality."

"I never heard that," said I. Now, have any of you here in the carriage ever heard of a butterfly as a sign for anything except Fri-

volity? I held my peace. I have no liking for talk, and I put the monument away in my pantry. There it stood till my lodger came home. He is a student, and has ever so many books. He assured me that it stood for Immortality, and so the monument was placed on the grave."

In the midst of this chatter Peer came to the station where he was to stop, that he, too, might become student, and have ever so many books.

IV.

HERR GABRIEL, the worthy man of learning, with whom Peer was to live as a boarding scholar, was himself at the railway station, waiting to meet him. Herr Gabriel was a lank, bony man, with great staring eyes that stuck out so very far, one was almost afraid that when he sneezed they would start out of his head entirely. He was accompanied by three of his own little boys; one of them stumbled over his own legs, and the other two trod on Peer's toes in their eagerness to see him close to. Two larger boys besides were with them,—the older about fourteen years, fair-skinned, freckled, and very pimply.

"Young Madsen, Student in about three years, if he studies! Primus, the dean's son." That was the younger, who looked like a head of wheat. "Both are boarders, studying with me," said Herr Gabriel. "Our little playthings," he called his own boys.

"Trine, take the new-comer's trunk on your wheelbarrow. The table is set for you at home."

"Stuffed turkey!" said the two young gentlemen who were boarders.

"Stuffed turkey!" said the little playthings, and the first again fell over his own legs.

"Caesar, look after your feet!" exclaimed Herr Gabriel; and they went into the town and out of it. There stood a great half-tumbled-down timber-work house, with a jasmine covered summer-house. Here stood Madame Gabriel, with more small "playthings," two little girls.

"The new pupil," said Herr Gabriel.

"Most heartily welcome!" said Madame Gabriel, a youthful, thrifty dame, red and white, with kiss-me-if-you-dare curls, and a good deal of pomade on her hair.

"Good heavens, what a well-grown lad you are!" said she to Peer. "You are quite a gentleman already. I supposed that you were like Primus or young Madsen. Angel Gabriel, it was well that the inner door is nailed. You know what I think."

"Fudge!" said Herr Gabriel; and they stepped into the room. There was a novel on the table, lying open, and a sandwich on it. One could see that it was used for a book mark—it lay across the open page.

"Now I must be the housewife!" and with all five of the children, and the two boarders, she carried Peer through the kitchen, out by the passage-way, and into a little room, the windows of which looked out on the garden; that was to be his study and sleeping apartment; it was next to Madame Gabriel's room, where she slept with all the five children, and where the connecting-door, for decency's sake, and to prevent gossip which spares nobody, had been that very day nailed up by Herr Gabriel, at Madame's express request.

"Here you are, to live just as if you were at your parents'. We have a theatre, too, in the town. The apothecary is the director of a private company, and we have traveling players. But now you shall have your turkey;" and so she carried Peer into the dining-room, where the week's wash was drying on a line.

"That doesn't do any harm," said she. "It is only cleanliness, and you are accustomed, of course, to that."

So Peer sat down to the roast turkey, in the midst of the children, but not with the two boarders, who had squeezed themselves in behind, and were now giving a dramatic representation for the entertainment of themselves and the stranger. There had lately been strolling players in town, who had acted Schiller's "Robbers;" the two oldest boys had been immensely taken with it, and at once performed the whole piece at home—all the parts, notwithstanding they only remembered these words: "Dreams come from the stomach." But they were made use of by all the characters in different tones of voice. There stood Amelia, with heavenly eyes and dreamy look: "Dreams come from the stomach!" said she, and covered her face with both her hands. Carl Moor came forward

with heroic stride and manly voice: "Dreams come from the stomach," and at that the whole flock of children, boys and girls, tumbled in; they were all robbers, and murdered one another, crying out, "Dreams come from the stomach."

That was Schiller's "Robbers." Peer had this representation and stuffed turkey for his first introduction into Herr Gabriel's house. Then he betook himself to his little chamber, whose window, into which the sun shone warmly, gave upon the garden. He sat there and looked out. Herr Gabriel was walking there, absorbed in reading a book. He came nearer, and looked in; his eyes seemed fixed upon Peer, who bowed respectfully. Herr Gabriel opened his mouth as wide as he could, thrust his tongue out, and let it wag from one side to the other right in the face of the astonished Peer, who could not understand what in the world he meant by this performance. Then off went Herr Gabriel, but turned back again before the window, and thrust his tongue out of his mouth.

What did he do that for? He was not thinking of Peer, or that the panes of glass were transparent; he only saw that one on the outside was reflected in them, and he wanted to see his tongue, as he had a stomach-ache; but Peer did not know all this.

Later in the evening Herr Gabriel went into his room, and Peer sat in his. It was quite late. He heard scolding—a woman's voice scolding in Madame Gabriel's sleeping chamber.

"I shall go up to Gabriel, and tell him what rascals you are!"

"We should also go to Gabriel and tell him what Madame is."

"I shall go into fits!" she cried out.

"Who'll see a woman in a fit! four skilings!"

Then Madame's voice sank deeper, but distinctly said: "What must the young gentleman in there think of our house at hearing all this plain talk." At that the scolding grew less, but then again rose louder and louder.

"*Finis*," cried Madame. "Go and make the punch; better peace than strife."

And then it was still. They went out of

the door ; the girls and Madame knocked on the door to Peer :—

“ Young man ! now you have some notion what it is to be a housewife. Thank Heaven, you don’t keep girls. I want peace, and so I give them punch. I would gladly give you a glass,—one sleeps so well after it,—but no one dares go through the entry after ten o’clock ; my Gabriel will not allow it. But you shall have your punch, nevertheless. There is a great hole stopped up in the door ; I will push the stopper out, put the nose of the pitcher in, and do you hold your tumbler under, and so I’ll give you the punch. It is a secret, even from my Gabriel. You must not worry him with household affairs.”

And so Peer got his punch, and there was peace in Madame Gabriel’s room, peace and quiet in the whole house. Peer lay down, thought of his mother and grandmother, said his evening prayer, and fell asleep. What one dreams the first night one sleeps in a strange house has special significance, grandmother had said. Peer dreamt that he took the amber heart, which he still constantly wore, laid it in a flower-pot, and it grew into a great tree, up through the loft and the roof ; it bore thousands of hearts of silver and gold ; the flower-pot broke in two, and it was no longer an amber heart—it had become mould, earth to earth—gone, gone forever ! Then Peer awoke ; he still had the amber heart, and it was warm, warm on his own warm heart.

V.

EARLY in the morning the first study hours began at Herr Gabriel’s. They studied French. At breakfast the only ones present were the boarders, the children, and Madame. She drank here her second cup of coffee ; her first she always took in bed. “ It is so wholesome, when one is liable to spasms.” She asked Peer what he had studied thus far.

“ French,” he replied.

“ It is a high cost language !” said she ; “ it is the diplomatic speech, and the one that is used by people of good blood. I did not study it in my childhood, but when one lives with a learned man one gets of his wisdom, quite as one gets his mother-milk. Thus I have all the necessary words. I am quite

confident I should know how to compromise myself in whatever company I happened to be.” *

Madame had won a foreign word, a title, by her marriage with a learned man. She was baptized Mette after a rich aunt, whose heir she was to be. She got the name, but not the inheritance. Herr Gabriel rebaptized Mette into Meta, the Latin for *measure*. When she was named, all her clothes, woolen and linen, were marked with the letters M. G., Meta Gabriel ; but young Madsen had a boy’s wit, and read in the letters M. G. the character “ very good ” (Danish *Meget godt* †), and therefore he added in ink a great interrogation point, and put it on the tablecloth, the towels, and sheets.

“ Don’t you like Madame ?” asked Peer, when young Madsen made him privately acquainted with this piece of wit. “ She is so kind, and Herr Gabriel is so learned.”

“ She is a bundle of lies !” said young Madsen ; “ and Herr Gabriel is a scoundrel. If I were only a corporal, and he a recruit, ugh ! how I would give him the flat of my sword !” And there was a blood-thirsty look about young Madsen ; his lips grew smaller than their wont, and his whole face seemed one great freckle.

These were dreadful words to hear spoken, and they gave Peer a shock ; yet young Madsen had the clearest right to them in his mind. It was a cruel thing on the part of parents and tutor that a fellow should waste his best, most delightful youth in learning grammar, names, and dates which nobody cares anything for, instead of enjoying his liberty and spending his time going about with a gun over his shoulder, like a good shot. “ No, one has no business to be shut up and sit on a bench till he falls asleep over a book ; Herr Gabriel wants that, and so one gets called lazy and has the character ‘ passable,’ ‡ yes, one’s parents

* Madame Gabriel, in her anxiety to use fine words, sometimes overshot the mark.—TRANS.

† The character given Meta Gabriel by young Madsen was not the highest, which is u. g., *udmærket godt*, but the next to that. It is a pity her name had not been Una.—TRANS.

‡ The fifth, and next to the worst character.—TRANS.

get letters about it; so I say Herr Gabriel is a scoundrel."

"He grips your hand too," added little Primus, who seemed to agree with young Madsen. It was not at all pleasant for Peer to hear them. But Peer got no "hand grips;" he was too grown up, as Madsen had said. He was not called lazy either, for that he was not; he was to have his hours alone. He was soon well ahead of Madsen and Primus.

"He has ability!" said Herr Gabriel.

"And one can see that he has been to dancing-school!" said Madame.

"We must have him in our dramatic society," said the apothecary, who lived more for the town's private theatre than for his apothecary shop. Malicious people applied the old stale witticism, that he had certainly been bitten by a mad player, for he was clean gone mad for the theatre.

"The young scholar is born for a lover," said the apothecary. "In a couple of years he could be Romeo; and I believe that if he were well painted, and had a little moustache, he could go on the stage very well this winter."

The Apothecary's daughter—"great dramatic talent," said the father; "true beauty," said the mother—was to be Juliet; Madame Gabriel must be the nurse, and the Apothecary, who was both director and stage-manager, would take the rôle of the apothecary—a slight one, but one of great importance. The whole depended on Herr Gabriel's permission for Peer to act Romeo. It was plain that it was best to work through Madame Gabriel, and the Apothecary understood that he must first win her over.

"You are born to be nurse," said he, and thought that he was flattering her exceedingly. "That is assuredly the most complete rôle in the piece," he continued. "It is the humorous rôle; without it the piece could not be tolerated for its melancholy. No one but you, Madame Gabriel, has the quickness and life that should bubble up here."

All very true, she agreed, but her husband would surely never permit his young pupil to contribute those crumbs of time which would have to be given in learning the part of Romeo. She promised, however, to "pump" him, as she called it. The Apothecary began

at once to study his part, and especially to think about his make-up. He wished to be a squint-eyed, poor, miserable fellow, and yet a clever man—rather a difficult problem; but Madame Gabriel had a much harder one in "pumping" her husband to the required point. He could not, he said, answer for it to Peer's guardians, who paid for his schooling and board, if he permitted the young man to play in tragedy. We cannot conceal the fact, however, that Peer had the most intense longing to act. "But it will not do," said he.

"It's coming," said Madame; "only let me keep on pumping." She would have given punch, but Herr Gabriel did not drink it with any pleasure. Married people are sometimes different. We say this without any offence to Madame.

"One glass and no more," she said to herself. "It elevates the soul and makes one happy, and thus it behooves us to be—it is our Lord's will with us."

Peer was to be Romeo. That was pumped through by Madame. The rehearsals were held at the Apothecary's. They had chocolate and "geniuses," that is to say, small biscuits. They were sold at the bake-shop, twelve for a skilling,* and they were so exceedingly small, and so many, that it was thought a witticism to call them *geniuses*.

"It is an easy thing to make fun of one," said Herr Gabriel, and so he himself gave nicknames to one thing and another. The Apothecary's house he called "Noah's Ark with its clean and unclean beasts," and that was only because of the affection which was shown by the family toward the two and four-footed pets in the house. The young lady had her own cat, *Graciosa*—a pretty, soft-skinned creature, that lay in the window, in her lap, on her work, or ran over the table spread for dinner. The mistress had a poultry-yard, a duck-yard, a parrot, and canary-birds; and Polly could outcry them all together. Two dogs, Flick and Flock, walked about the chamber; they were not perfumery bottles by any means, and they lay on the sofa and on the matrimonial bed.

* A little more than half a cent.

The rehearsal began, and was only interrupted a moment by the dogs slobbering over Madame Gabriel's new gown; but that was out of pure friendship and it did not spot it. The cat also caused a slight disturbance: it would insist on giving its paw to Juliet, sit on her head and beat its tail. Juliet's tender speeches were divided between the cat and Romeo. Every word that Peer had to say was exactly what he wished to say to the Apothecary's daughter. How lovely and charming she was, a child of Nature, who, as Madame Gabriel expressed it, went right by the side of her part. Peer grew quite warm about it.

There surely was instinct or something even higher with the cat. It perched on Peer's shoulders and symbolized the sympathy between Romeo and Juliet; with each successive rehearsal Peer's ardor grew more manifest and stronger, the cat more confidential, the parrot and the canary-birds more noisy; Flick and Flock ran in and out. The evening of the representation came, and Peer was Romeo himself—he kissed Juliet right on her mouth.

"Quite like nature!" said Madame Gabriel.

"Disgraceful!" said the Councillor, Herr Svendsen, the richest citizen and fattest man in the town. The perspiration ran down him, the house was so warm and he himself was so heated. Peer found no favor in his eyes. "Such a puppy!" said he; "a puppy so long too that one could crack him in halves and make two puppies of him."

Great applause—and one enemy! He got off well. Indeed Peer was a Lucky Peer. Tired and overcome by the exertions of the evening and the flattery shown him, he went home to his little chamber. It was past midnight; Madame Gabriel knocked on the wall.

"Romeo! here's punch!"

And the spout was put through the door, and Peer Romeo held his glass under.

"Good-night, Madame Gabriel."

But Peer could not sleep. All that he had said, and especially what Juliet had said, buzzed in his head, and when at length he fell asleep, he dreamt of a wedding—a wedding with Miss Frandsen! What singular things one can dream!

(To be continued.)

LUCKY PEER.

BY HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

(Continued from page 398.)

VI.

"Now get that comedy out of your head!" said Herr Gabriel the next morning, "and let us squeeze in some science."

Peer had come near to thinking like young Madsen: "that one was giving up his fresh youth when he was shut up and set down with a book in his hand;" but when he sat at his book there shone from it so many noble and good thoughts that Peer found himself quite absorbed in it. He heard of the world's great men and their achievements: so many had been the children of poor people; Themistocles the hero, son of a potter; Shakespeare, a poor weaver's boy, who when a young man held horses at the door of the theatre, where afterward he was the mightiest man in poetic art of all countries and all time. He heard of the singing contest at Wartburg, where the poets vied to see who would produce the most beautiful poem—a contest like the old trial of the Grecian poets at the great public feasts. Herr Gabriel talked of these with especial delight. Sophocles had in his old age written one of his best tragedies and won the prize of victory over all the others. In this honor and fortune his heart broke with joy. Ah! how blessed to die in the midst of his joy of victory! What could be more fortunate! Thoughts

and dreamings filled the soul of our little friend, but he had no one to whom he could tell them. They would not be intelligible to young Madsen or to Primus, nor to Madame Gabriel either: she was either all good humor, or the sorrowing mother, sitting dissolved in tears. Her two small girls looked with astonishment at her, nor could Peer either discover why she was so overwhelmed with sorrow and grief.

"The poor children!" said she then, "a mother is ever thinking of their future. The boys can take care of themselves. Cæsar falls, but he gets up again; the two older ones splash in the water-bowl; they want to be in the navy and make good matches. But my two little girls! what will their future be? They will reach the age when the heart feels, and then know I well that the one they each get attached to will not be at all after Gabriel's mind; he will give them one they cannot endure, and then will they be so unhappy. That is what I think of as a mother, and that is my sorrow and my grief. You poor children! you to become so unhappy!" She wept.

The little girls looked at her; Peer looked at her with a sympathetic look. He could not think of anything to answer, and so he took himself back to his little room, sat down

at the old piano, and forth came tones and fantasies which streamed through his heart.

In the early morning he went with a clear brain to his studies and performed the part assigned to him. He was a conscientious, right-minded fellow; in his diary he recorded what each day he had read and studied, how late he had sat up playing at the piano—always mutely, so as not to waken Madame Gabriel. It never read in his diary, except on Sunday, the day of rest: "Thought of Juliet," "Was at the Apothecary's," "Wrote a letter to mother and grandmother." Peer was still Romeo and a good son.

"Very industrious!" said Herr Gabriel. "Follow that example, young Madsen. You will be *reject*."

"Scoundrel!" said young Madsen to himself; Primus, the dean's son, suffered from lethargy. "It is a disease," said the dean's wife, and he was not to be treated with severity. The deanery was only two miles distant; wealth and fine society were there.

"He will die a bishop!" said Madame Gabriel. "He has good *conjugations* at the court, and the deaness is a lady of noble birth. She knows all about Haaltry—that means coats-of-arms."

It was Whitsuntide. A year had gone by since Peer came to Herr Gabriel's house. He had acquired an education, but his voice had not returned; would it ever come?

The Gabriel household was invited to the Dean's to a great dinner and a ball in the evening. A good many guests came from the town and from the manor-houses about. The apothecary's family were invited; Romeo would see Juliet, perhaps dance the first dance with her.

It was a substantial place, the deanery,—whitewashed and without any manure-heaps in the yard; with a dove-cote painted green, about which twined an ivy vine. The Deaness was a corpulent woman—*glaukopis athene*. Herr Gabriel called her the blue-eyed, not the ox-eyed, as Juno was called, thought Peer. There was a certain remarkable mildness about her, an endeavor to have an invalid took; she certainly had Primus's sickness. She was dressed in a corn-colored silk, wore great curls, caught up on the right by a large

medallion portrait of her great-grandmother, a general's wife, and on the left by an equally large bunch of grapes of white porcelain.

The Dean had a ruddy, well-conditioned countenance, with shining white teeth, well suited to biting into a roast fillet. His conversation was always garnished with anecdotes. He could discourse with everybody, but no one had ever succeeded in carrying on a conversation with him.

The councillor, too, was here, and among the strangers from the manors was Felix, the merchant's son; he had been confirmed, and was now a young gentleman very elegant in clothes and manners; he was a millionaire, they said. Madame Gabriel had not courage to speak to him.

Peer was overjoyed at seeing Felix, who came forward most cordially to meet him, and said that he brought greetings from his parents, who read all the letters which Peer wrote home to his mother and grandmother.

The dancing began. The Apothecary's daughter was to dance the first dance with the councillor; that was the promise she had made at home to her mother and the councillor himself. The second dance was promised to Peer; but Felix came and took her out, only vouchsafing a good-natured nod.

"You promised that I should have one dance; the young lady will only give permission when you promise."

Peer kept a civil face and said nothing, and Felix danced with the Apothecary's daughter, the most beautiful girl at the ball. He danced the next dance also with her.

"Will you grant me the supper dance?" asked Peer, with a pale face.

"Yes, the supper dance," she answered, with her most charming smile.

"You surely will not take my partner from me?" said Felix, who stood close by. "It is not friendly. We two old friends from the town! You say that you are so very glad to see me. Then you must allow me the pleasure of taking the lady to supper!" and he put his arm round Peer and laid his forehead jestingly against his. "Granted! isn't it? granted!"

"No!" said Peer, his eyes sparkling with anger.

Felix gayly raised his arms and set his elbows akimbo, looking like a frog ready to spring :—

“You have perfect right, young gentleman ! I would say the same if the supper dance were promised me, sir !” He drew back with a graceful bow to the young lady. But not long after, when Peer stood in a corner and arranged his neck-tie, Felix came, put his arm round his neck, and with the most coaxing look, said :—

“Be splendid ! my mother and your mother and old grandmother—they will all say that it is just like you. I am off to-morrow, and I shall be horribly bored if I do not take the young lady to supper. My own friend ! my only friend !”

At that Peer, as his only friend, could not hold out ; he himself carried Felix to the young beauty.

It was bright morning when the guests the next day drove away from the Dean's. The Gabriel household was in one carriage, and the whole family went to sleep except Peer and Madame.

She talked about the young merchant, the rich man's son, who was really Peer's friend ; she had heard him say : “Your health, my friend.” “Mother and grandmother.” There was something so “*negligent*” and *gallant* in him, she said ; “one saw at once that he was the son of rich people, or else a count's child. That the rest of us can't claim. One must be able to bow !”

Peer said nothing. He was depressed all day. In the evening, at bed-time, when lying in bed sleep was chased away, and he said to himself : “How they bow and smirk !” That had he done, the rich young fellow ; “because one is born poor, he is placed under the favor and condescension of these richly-born people. Are you then better than we ? And why were you created better than we ?”

There was something vicious rearing up in him ; *something wrong* ; something which his grandmother would be grieved at. “Poor grandmother ! Thou also hast been appointed to poverty. God has known how to do that !” and he felt anger in his heart, and yet at the same time an apprehension that he was sinning in thought and word against the good God. He grieved to think he had lost his

child's mind, and yet he possessed it just by this grief, whole and rich in nature. Happy Peer !

A week after there came a letter from grandmother. She wrote, as she could, great letters and small letters mixed up, all her heart's love in things small and great that concerned Peer :—

“MY OWN SWEET, BLESSED BOY :—I think of thee, I long for thee, and that too does thy mother. She gets along very well with her washing. And the merchant's Felix was in to see us yesterday, with a greeting from thee. You had been at the Dean's ball, and thou wert so honorable ; that wilt thou always be, and rejoice the heart of thy old grandmother and thy hard-working mother. She has something to tell you about Miss Frandsen.”

And then followed a postscript from Peer's mother.

“Miss Frandsen is married, the old thing. The bookbinder Court is become court bookbinder, in accordance with his petition, with a great sign, ‘Court Bookbinder Court !’ And she has become Madame Court. It is an old love that does not rust, my sweet boy.

“THY MOTHER.”

“Second Postscript. Grandmother has knit you six pair of woollen socks, which you will get by the first opportunity. I have laid with them a pork-pie, your favorite dish. I know that you never get it at Herr Gabriel's, since the lady is so afraid of what—I don't know exactly how to spell ‘trichines.’ You must not believe that, but only eat.

“THY OWN MOTHER.”

Peer read the letter and read himself happy. Felix was so good ; what wrong had he done him ! They had separated at the Dean's without saying good-bye to each other.

“Felix is better than I,” said Peer.

VII.

In a quiet life one day glides into the next, and month quickly follows month. Peer was already in the second year of his stay at

Herr Gabriel's, who with great earnestness and determination—Madame called it obstinacy—insisted that he should not again go on the stage.

Peer himself received from the singing-master, who monthly paid the stipend for his instruction and support, a serious admonition not to think of comedy-playing so long as he was placed there; and he obeyed, but his thoughts traveled often to the theatre at the capital. They had but a fancied life there, on the stage where he was to have stood as a great singer; now his voice was gone, nor did it come back, and often was he sorely oppressed thereat. Who could comfort him? neither Herr Gabriel nor Madame; but our Lord surely could. Consolation comes to us in many ways. Peer found it in sleep—he was indeed a lucky Peer.

One night he dreamed that it was Whitsunday, and he was out in the charming green forest, where the sun shone in through the boughs, and where all the ground beneath the trees was covered with anemones and cowslips. Then the cuckoo began—"Cuckoo!" How many years shall I live? asked Peer, for that people always ask the cuckoo the first time in the year that they hear its note, and the cuckoo answered: "Cuckoo!" but uttered no more and was silent.

"Shall I only live a single year?" asked Peer; "truly that is too little. Be so good as to cuckoo if it is so!" Then began the bird—"Cuckoo! cuckoo!" Aye! it went on without end, and as it went Peer cuckooed with it, and that as lively as if he too were a cuckoo; but his note was stronger and clearer; all the little birds warbled, and Peer sang after them, but far more beautifully; he had all the clear voice of his childhood, and carolled in song. He was so glad at heart, and then he awoke, but with the assurance that the sounding-board still was in him, that his voice still lived, and some bright Whitsun morning would burst forth in all its freshness; and so he slept, happy in this assurance.

But days and weeks and months passed; he perceived not that his voice came again.

Every bit of intelligence which he could get of the theatre at the capital was a true feast for his soul; it was meat and drink to

him. Crumbs are really bread, and he received crumbs thankfully—the poorest little story. There was a flax-dealer's family living near the Gabriels. The mother, an estimable mistress of her household, brisk and laughing, but without any acquaintance or knowledge of the theatre, had been at the capital for the first time, and was enraptured with everything there, even with the people; they had laughed at everything she had said, she assured them—and that was very likely.

"Were you at the theatre also?" asked Peer.

"That I was," replied the flax-dealer's wife. "How I steamed! You ought to have seen me sit and steam in that hot place!"

"But what did they do? What piece did they play?"

"That will I tell you," said she. "I shall give you the whole comedy. I was there twice. The first evening it was a talking piece. Out came she, the princess: 'Ahbe, dahbe! abe, dabe!' how she could talk. Next came the people: 'Ahbe, dahbe! abe, dabe!' and then down came Madame. Now they began again. The prince, he: 'Ahbe, dahbe! abe, dabe!' then down came Madame. She fell down five times that evening. The second time I was there, it was all singing: 'Ahbe, dahbe! abe, dabe!' and then down came Madame. There was a countrywoman sitting by my side; she had never been in the theatre, and supposed that it was all over; but I, who now knew all about it, said that when I was there last, Madame was down five times. The singing evening she only did it three times. There! there you have both the comedies, as true to life as I saw them."

If it was tragedy she saw, Madame always came down. Then it flashed over Peer's mind what she meant. At the great theatre there was painted upon the curtain which fell between the acts a great female figure, a Muse with the comic and the tragic mask. This was Madame who "came" down. That had been the real comedy; what they said and sang had been to the flax-dealer's wife only "Ahbe, dahbe! abe, dabe!" but it had been a great pleasure, and so had it been also to Peer, and not less to Madame Gabriel, who

heard this recital of the pieces. She sat with an expression of astonishment and a consciousness of mental superiority, for had she not, as Nurse, been Shakspeare's "Romeo and Juliet," as the Apothecary said?

"Then down comes Madame," explained by Peer, became afterward a witty by-word in the house every time a child, a cup, or one or another piece of furniture fell upon the floor in the house.

"That is the way proverbs and familiar sayings arise!" said Herr Gabriel, who appropriated everything to scientific use.

New Year's eve, at the stroke of twelve, the Gabriels and their boarders stood, each with a glass of punch, the only one Herr Gabriel drank the whole year, because punch makes one's stomach ache. They drank a health to the new year, and counted the strokes of the clock, "one, two," till the twelfth stroke. "Down comes Madame!" said they.

The new year rolled up and on. At Whitsuntide Peer had been two years in the house.

VIII.

Two years were gone, but the voice had not come back. How would the future be for our little friend?

He could always be a tutor in a school—that was in Herr Gabriel's mind—there was a livelihood in that, though nothing to be married on; nor was Peer's mind quite made up as to how large a share of his heart the apothecary's daughter had.

"Be a tutor!" said Madame Gabriel; "a schoolmaster! then be the veriest humdrum on earth, just like my Gabriel. No, you are born for the theatre. Be the greatest actor in the world: that is something else than being a tutor."

An actor! ay, that was the goal.

He gave vent to his feelings in a letter to the singing-master; he told of his longing and his hope. Most earnestly did he long for the great city where his mother and grandmother lived, whom he had not seen for two years. The distance was only thirty miles;* in six hours, by the quick train, that could be passed. Why had they not seen one another? That

is easily explained. Peer had, on leaving, been made to give his promise to stay where he should be placed, and not to think of a visit. His mother was busy enough with her washing and ironing. Yet, for all that, she thought a good many times of making the great journey, though it would cost a deal of money, but she never did. Grandmother had a horror of railways; she thought to go by them was to fly in the face of Providence. Nothing could induce her to travel by steam; she was, too, an old woman, and she would take no journey until she took her last one up to our Lord.

That she said in May, but in June the old thing did travel, and quite alone, too, the thirty long miles, to the strange town, to strange people, and all to go to Peer. It was a great occasion, the most sorrowful one that could occur to mother and grandmother.

The cuckoo had said "cuckoo!" without end when Peer the second time asked it, "How many years shall I live?" His health and spirits were good: the future shone brightly. He had received a delightful letter from his fatherly friend, the singing-master. Peer was to go home, and they would see what could be done for him—what course he should pursue if his voice was really gone.

"Appear as Romeo!" said Madame Gabriel; "you are old enough now for the lover's part, and have got some color in your cheeks; you don't need to paint."

"Be Romeo!" said the Apothecary and the Apothecary's daughter.

Many thoughts went sounding through his head and heart. But

"Nobody knows what to-morrow shall be."

He sat down below in the garden that stretched out to the meadow. It was evening and moonlight. His cheeks burned, his blood was on fire, the air brought a grateful coolness. There over the moor a mist hung that rose and sank and made him think of the dance of the Elfin maidens. There came into his mind the old saying of the Knight Olaf, who rode out to ask the guests to his wedding, but was stopped by the Elfin maidens, who drew him into their dance and sport, and thereby came his death. It was a piece of folk lore, an

* Danish measure.

old poem. The moonlight and the mist over the moor painted pictures for it this evening.

Peer sat and soon was in a half dreaming state, looking out upon it all. The bushes seemed to have shapes of human sort and half of beastly form. They stood motionless, while the mist rose like a great waving veil. Something like this had Peer seen in a ballet at the theatre, when Elfin maidens were represented, whirling and waving with veils of gauze; but here it was far more charming and more wonderful. So great a scene as this no theatre could show; none had so clear an air, so shining a moonlight.

Just in front, in the mist, appeared most distinctly a female shape, and it became three, and the three many; they danced hand in hand, floating girls. The air bore them along to the hedge where Peer stood. They nodded to him; they spake; it was like the cling! clang! of silver bells. They danced into the garden and about him; they enclosed him in their circle. Without thought he danced with them, but not their dance. He whirled about, as in the memorable vampire dance, but he thought not of that, he thought not at all of aught more, but was enveloped in the wondrous beauty he saw around him.

The moor was a sea, so deep and dark-blue, with water-lilies that were bright with all conceivable colors; dancing over the waves they bore him upon their veil to the opposite shore, where the giant mound has thrown aside its grassy sward and rose into a castle of clouds, but the clouds were of marble; flowering vines of gold and costly stones twined about the mighty blocks of marble; each flower was a radiant bud that sang with human voice. It was like a choir of thousands and thousands of happy children. Was it heaven, or was it the Elfin hill?

The castle walls stirred—they moved toward each other—they closed about him. He was within them and the world of men was without. Then felt he a pain, a strange yearning, as never before. No outlet could he find, but from the floor away up to the roof there smiled upon him sweet young girls; they were so loving as he looked upon them, and yet the thought came—are ye but paintings? He would speak with them, but his tongue found

no words; his speech was gone; not a sound came from his lips. Then he threw himself upon the earth, with a misery he never before had known.

One of the Elfin maidens came to him; surely she meant well to him in her manner; she had taken the shape he would most like to see; it was the likeness of the Apothecary's daughter; he was almost ready to believe that it was she; but soon he saw that she was hollow in the back—a charming front view, but open behind and nothing at all inside.

"One hour here is a hundred years outside," said she; "thou hast already been here a whole hour. All whom you know and love without these walls are dead. Stay with us! Yes, stay thou must, or the walls will hold thee in a vice till the blood spirts from thy forehead."

And the walls trembled, and the air became like that of a glowing furnace. He found his voice.

"Lord, Lord, hast Thou forsaken me?" he cried from the depths of his soul.

Then Grandmother stood beside him. She took him in her arms, she kissed his brow, she kissed his mouth.

"My own sweet little one!" said she, "our Lord doth not let thee go; He lets none of us go, not the greatest sinner. To God be praise and honor for evermore!"

And she took out her psalmbook, the same one from which she and Peer many a Sunday had sung. How her voice rang! how full her tones! all the Elfin maidens laid their heads down to the rest they longed for. Peer sang with Grandmother, as before he had sung each Sunday; how strong and mighty all at once was his voice! the walls of the castle trembled; they became clouds and mist; Grandmother went with him out of the hill into the high grass, where the glow-worms made light and the moon shone. But his feet were so weary he could not move them; he sank down on the sward; it was the softest bed; there he rested and awoke to the sound of a psalm.

Grandmother sat beside him—sat by his bed in the little chamber in Herr Gabriel's house. The fever was over; life and reason had returned. But he had been at the door of death. Down in the garden, that evening,

they had found him in a swoon; a violent fever followed. The doctor thought that he would not get up from it again, but must die, and so they had written thus to his mother. She and Grandmother felt that they must go to him; both could not leave, and so the old grandmother went, and went by the railway.

"It was for Peer only that I did it," said she. "I did it in God's name, or I must believe that I flew with the Evil One on a broomstick on Midsummer Eve."

IX.

THE journey home was made with glad and light heart. Devoutly did grandmother thank our Lord that Peer was yet to outlive her. She had delightful neighbors in the railway carriage—the apothecary and his daughter. They talked about Peer: they loved him as if they belonged to his family. He was to become a great actor, said the apothecary; his voice had now returned, too, and there was a fortune in such a throat as his.

What a pleasure it was to the grandmother to hear such words! She lived on them; she believed them thoroughly; and so they came to the station at the capital, where the mother met her.

"God be praised for the railway!" said grandmother, "and be praised, too, that I quite forgot I was on it! I owe that to these excellent people;" and she pressed the hands of the apothecary and his daughter. "The railway is a blessed discovery when one is through with it. One is in God's hands."

Then she talked of her sweet boy, who was out of all danger and housed with people who were very well off and kept two girls and a man. Peer was like a son in the house, and on the same footing with two children of distinguished families: one of them was a Dean's son. The grandmother had lodged at the post-inn; it was dreadfully dear! but then she had been invited to Madam Gabriel's; there she had stayed five days; they were angelic people, especially the mistress; she had urged her to drink punch, excellently made, but rather strong.

In about a month would Peer, by God's help, be strong enough to come home to the capital.

"He has been flattered and has become very fine," said the mother. "He will not feel at home here in the garret. I am very glad that the singing-master has invited him to stay with him. And yet," so mourned she, "it is horribly sad that one should be so poor that one's own bairn should not find it good enough for him in his own home."

"Don't say those words to Peer," said grandmother; "you don't see into him as I do."

"But he must have meat and drink, any way, no matter how fine he has grown; and he shall not want those so long as my hands can joggle in the wash-tub. Madam Court has told me that he can dine twice a week with her, now that she is well off. She knows what prosperity is, and what rough times are, too. Has she not herself told me that one evening, in the box at the theatre where the old *danseuses* have a place, she felt sick? The whole day long she had only had water and a caraway seed cake, and she was sick from hunger, and very faint. 'Water! water!' cried the other. 'No! some tarts!' she begged; 'tarts!' She needed something nourishing, and had not the least need of water. Now she has her own pantries and a well-spread table."

Thirty miles away Peer still sat, but happy in the thought that he would soon be in the city, at the theatre, with all his old, dear friends, whom now he rightly knew how to value. Within him there was music: without there was music too. All was sunshine—the glad time of youth, the time of hope and anticipation. Every day he grew stronger, got good spirits and color. But Madam Gabriel was much depressed as his time for departure drew near.

"You are going into great society, and into the midst of many temptations, for you are handsome—that you have become in our house. You have *naïveté*, just as I have, and that will get you into temptation. One must not be fastidious, and he must not be mangy; fastidious like the Queen Dagmar, who on Sunday tied her silk sleeves and then had her mind made up about such little things. More than that, I would never have taken on so as Lucretia did. What did she stick her-

self for? She was pure and honest; everybody in the town knew that. What could she do about the misfortune which I won't talk about, but that you at your time of life understand perfectly well? So she gives a shriek and takes the dagger! There was no use in that. I would not have done it, nor you either; for we are both people of nature, and that people will be to the end of time, and that will you continue to be in your art career. How happy I shall be to read about you in the papers! Some time you will come to our little town and appear perhaps as Romeo, but I shall not be the nurse then. I shall sit in the parquet and enjoy myself."

Madam had a great washing and ironing done the week he went away, that Peer might go home with a whole, clean wardrobe, as when he came. She drew a new, strong ribbon through his amber heart; that was the only thing she wanted for a "remembrance souvenir," but she did not get it.

From Herr Gabriel he received a French lexicon, enriched with marginal notes by Herr Gabriel's own hand. Madam Gabriel gave him roses and ribbon-grass. The roses would wither, but the grass would keep all winter if it did not get into the water but was kept in a dry place, and she wrote a quotation from Goethe as a kind of album-leaf: "Umgang mit Frauen ist das Element guter Sitten." She gave it in translation: "Intercourse with women is the foundation of good manners. Goethe."

"He was a great man!" said she, "if he had only not written 'Faust,' for I don't understand it. Gabriel says so too."

Young Madsen presented Peer with a not badly-done drawing which he had made of Herr Gabriel hanging from the gallows, with a ferule in his hand, and the inscription: "A great actor's first conductor on the road of science." Primus, the Dean's son, gave him a pair of slippers, which the Deaness herself had made, but so large that Primus could not fill them for a year or two yet. Upon the soles was written in ink:—"Remember a sorrowing friend. Primus."

All of Herr Gabriel's household accompanied Peer to the train.

"They shall not say that you went off

sans adieu!" said Madam, and she kissed him in the railway station.

"I am not concerned," said she; "when one does not do a thing secretly, one can do anything!"

The signal-whistle let off steam; young Madsen and Primus shouted hurra! the "small playthings" joined in with them; Madam dried her eyes and wiped them with her pocket handkerchief; Herr Gabriel said only the word, *Vale!*

The villages and stations flew by. Were the people in them as happy as Peer? He thought of that, praised his good fortune, and thought of the invisible golden apple which grandmother had seen lying in his hand when he was a child. He thought of his lucky find in the gutter, and, above all, of his new-found voice, and of the knowledge he had now acquired. He had become altogether another person. He sang within for gladness; it was a great restraint for him to keep from singing aloud in the cars.

Now the towers of the city appeared, and the buildings began to show themselves. The train reached the station. There stood mother and grandmother, and one other along with them, Madam Court, well bound, Court book-binder Court's lady, born Frandsen. Neither in want nor in prosperity did she forget her friends. She must needs kiss him as his mother and grandmother had done.

"Court could not come with me," said she; "he is hard at work binding a lot of books for the King's private library. You had your good luck, and I have mine. I have my Court and my own chimney corner, with a rocking-chair. Twice a week you are to dine with us. You shall see my life at home; it is a complete ballet!"

Mother and grandmother hardly got a chance to talk to Peer, but they looked on him with eyes that shone with delight. Then he had to take a cab to drive to his new home at the singing-master's. They laughed and they cried.

"He is still so charming!" said grandmother.

"He has his own good face just as when he went away!" said mother; "and he will keep that when he is in the theatre."

The cab stopped at the singing-master's door, but the master was out. His old servant opened the door and showed Peer up to his chamber, where all about on the walls were portraits of composers, and on the stove a white plaster bust stood gleaming. The old man, a little dull, but trustworthiness itself, showed him the drawers in the bureau, and hooks for him to hang his clothes from, and said he was very willing to clean his boots; when the singing-master came in and gave Peer a hearty shake of the hand in welcome.

"Here is every convenience!" said he; "make yourself quite at home: you can use my piano in the room. To-morrow we will hear how your voice gets on. This is our warden of the castle, our director of household affairs," and he nodded to the old servant. "All is in order; Carl Maria Von Weber, on the stove there, has been whitened in honor of your coming. He was dreadfully grimy. But it is not Weber at all that is put up there, it is Mozart. How comes he there?"

"It is the old Weber," said the servant; "I took him myself to the plaster-man, and he has sent him home this morning."

"But this is a bust of Mozart, and not a bust of Weber."

"Pardon, sir," said the servant; "it is the old Weber, who has become clean. The master does not recognize him again now that he has been whitened."

He could learn how it was of the plaster-man, and then he got the answer that Weber had been broken in pieces, and so he had sent him Mozart instead, it was all the same thing on the stove.

The first day Peer was not to sing nor play, but when our young friend came into the parlor, where the piano stood, and the opera of Joseph lay open upon it, he sang "My Fourteenth Spring," and sang with a voice that was clear as a bell. There was something so charming about it, so innocent, and yet so strong and full. The singing-master's eyes were wet with tears.

"So shall it be, and better still!" exclaimed he. "Now we will shut the piano for the day; you will want to rest."

"But I must go this evening to my mother

and grandmother, for I have promised it;" and he hurried away. The setting sun shone over the home of his childhood; the bits of glass in the wall sparkled; it was like a diamond castle. Mother and grandmother sat up there in the garret, a good many steps up, but he flew up three stairs at a time, and was at their door and received with kisses and embraces.

It was clean and tidy there in the little chamber. There stood the stove, the old bear, and the chest of drawers with the hidden treasure which he knew when he rode his hobby horse; on the walls hung the three familiar pictures: the King's portrait, a picture of Our Lord, and father's silhouette, cut out in black paper. It was a good side view, said mother, but it would have been more like him if the paper had been white and red, for that he was an excellent man! and Peer was the very picture of him.

There was much to talk about, much to tell. They were to have a head-cheese, and Madam Court had promised to look in upon them in the evening.

"But how is it that those two old people, Court and Miss Frandsen, ever should have got married?" asked Peer.

"It has been in their thoughts these many years," said mother. "You know he was married. Well, he did it, they say, to pique Miss Frandsen, who looked down on him when she was in her high and mighty state. He got a comfortable property with his wife, but she was dreadfully old; lively, and on crutches! She could not die; he waited for it. It would not have surprised me, if, like the man in the story, he had every Sunday put the old thing out in the open air, so that our Lord might see her and remember to send for her."

"Miss Frandsen sat still and waited," said grandmother. "I never believed she would get it. But last year Madam Court died, and so Frandsen came to be mistress in the house."

At that moment in came Madam Court.

"We were talking about you," said grandmother; "we were talking about your patience and reward."

"Yes," said Madam Court. "It did not come in my youth, but one is always young so

long as one hasn't a broken body, says my Court. He is a witty fellow. We are old, good works, he says, both in one volume, and that with gilt top. I am so happy with my Court and my chimney-corner. A porcelain stove! there the fire is made in the evening, and it keeps warm all the next day. It is such a luxury. It is as in the ballet of Circe's Island. Do you remember me as Circe?"

"Yes, you were charming!" said grandmother. "But how people do change!" That was not at all said impolitely, and was not so taken. Then came the head-cheese and the tea.

The next morning Peer paid his visit at the merchant's. The lady met him, pressed his hand, and bade him take a seat by her. In conversation with her he expressed his great gratitude; he knew that the merchant was his secret benefactor. The lady did not know it. "But it is like my husband," said she. "It is not worth talking about."

The merchant was nearly angry when Peer touched on this. "You are on the wrong track altogether," said he, and abruptly closed the conversation. Felix was a student and was to go into diplomatic life.

"My husband calls it all folly," said the lady. "I have no opinion. Providence disposes of such things."

Felix did not show himself, for he was taking a lesson at his fencing-master's. At home Peer told how he had thanked the merchant, but that he would not receive his thanks.

"Who told you that he was what you call him, your benefactor?" asked the singing-master.

"Mother and grandmother," answered Peer.

"Oh, then it must be so."

"You know about it?" said Peer.

"I know; but you will get nothing out of me. Now come, let us sing an hour here at home, this morning."

X.

ONCE a week there was quartette music. Ears, soul, and thought were filled with the grand musical poems of Beethoven and Mozart. For a long time Peer had heard no good and well-given music. It was as if a

kiss of fire darted down his spine and shot through all his nerves. His eyes filled with tears. Every music-evening here at home was a feast to him that made a deeper impression upon him than any opera at the theatre, where there is always something that destroys pleasure or brings faults too strongly forward. The first thing one knows the words do not come out right; they are so smoothed down in the singing that they are as intelligible to a Chinaman as to a Greenlander; then the effect is weakened by faults in the dramatic expression, and by a full voice sinking down in single places to the power of a music-box, or is drawled out in false tones. Lack of truthfulness also in decoration and costume is to be observed. All this was absent from the quartette. The music poems rose in all their grandeur, costly hangings decorated the walls in the concert-room, and he was in the world of music, listening to the masters in their fascination.

In the great public music-hall was given one evening, by a well-trained orchestra, Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony; especially the *andante* movement, "the scene by the brook," stirred and excited our young friend with strange power. It carried him into the living, fresh woods; the lark and the nightingale warbled; there the cuckoo sang. What beauty of Nature, what a well-spring of refreshment was there! From this hour he knew within himself that it was the picturesque music, in which Nature was reflected, and the emotions of men's hearts were set forth, that struck deepest into his soul: Beethoven and Haydn became his favorite composers.

With the singing-master he talked frequently of this, and at every conversation they two came nearer each other. How rich in knowledge this man was, as inexhaustible as Mimer's* well. Peer listened to him, and just as when he was a little boy he heard eagerly grandmother's wonder stories and tales, now he heard those of the world of music, and knew what the forest and the sea told, what sounds in the old giant mound, what every bird sings with its bill, and what

* Mimer, in the Scandinavian mythology, is the goddess of wisdom. It was from her well that Odin drew his bucketfuls of wisdom.—TRANS.

the voiceless flowers breathe forth in fragrance.

The hour for singing every morning was a real hour of delight for master and pupil; every little song was sung with a freshness, an expression, and a simplicity: most charmingly did they give Schubert's "Travel Song." The melody was true, and the words also; they blended together, they exalted and illumined one another, as is fitting. Peer was undeniably a dramatic singer. Each month showed progress in ability; every week, yes, each day by day.

Our young friend grew in a wholesome, happy way, knowing no want or sorrow. His trust in mankind was never deceived; he had a child's soul and a man's endurance, and everywhere he was received with gentle eyes and a kind welcome. Day by day the relations between him and the singing-master grew more intimate and more confidential; the two were like elder and younger brothers, and the younger had all the fervor and warmth of a young heart; that the elder understood, and gave in turn in his own wise.

The singing-master's character was marked by a southern ardor, and one saw at once that this man could hate vehemently or love passionately, and fortunately this last governed in him. He was, moreover, so placed by a fortune left him by his father, that he did not need to take any office which did not content him. He did secretly a great deal of good in a sensible way, but would not suffer people to thank him, or, indeed, to talk about it.

"Have I done anything," said he, "it is because I could and ought to do it. It was my duty."

His old serving-man, "our warden," as he called him in jest, talked only with half a voice when he gave expression to his opinion about the master of the house. "I know what he gives away 'between a year and a day,' and I don't know the half! The King ought to give him a star to wear on his breast. But he would not wear it; he would get mad as lightning, if I know him, should one notice him for his honesty. He is happy beyond the rest of us, in the faith which he has. He is just like a man out of the Bible." And at that the old fellow gave an

additional emphasis, as if Peer could have some doubt.

He felt and understood well that the singing-master was a true Christian in good earnest, an example for every one. Yet the man never went to church, and when Peer one day mentioned that next Sunday he was going with his mother and grandmother to our Lord's table, and asked if the singing-master never did the same, the answer came, No. It seemed as if he would say something more, as if, indeed, he had some confidence to impart to Peer, but it was not said.

One evening he read aloud from the papers of the beneficence of two or three persons, who were mentioned, and that led him to speak of good deeds and their reward.

"When one does not think of it, it is sure to come. The reward for good deeds is like dates that are spoken of in the Talmud, they ripen late and then are sweet."

"Talmud," asked Peer, "what sort of a book is that?"

"A book," was the answer, "from which more than one seed of thought has been implanted in Christianity."

"Who wrote the book?"

"Wise men in the earliest time; wise in various nations and religions. Here is wisdom enclosed in such words as one finds in Solomon's Proverbs. What kernels of truth! One reads here that men round about the whole earth, in all the centuries, have always been the same. 'Thy friend has a friend, and thy friend's friend has a friend; be discreet in what you say,' is found here. It is a piece of wisdom for all times. 'No one can jump over his own shadow!' is here too, and, 'Wear shoes when you walk over thorns!' You ought to read this book. You will find in it the proof of culture more clearly than you will discover cultivation of the soil in layers of earth. For me, as a Jew, it is besides an inheritance from my fathers."

"Jew," said Peer, "are you a Jew?"

"Did you not know that? How strange that we two should not have spoken of it before to-day."

Mother and grandmother knew nothing about it either; they had never thought anything about it, but always had known that the

singing-master was an honorable, unexceptionable man. It was in the providence of God that Peer had come in his way ; next to our Lord he owed him all his fortune. And now the mother let out a secret, which she had carried faithfully a few days only, and which, under the pledge of secrecy, had been told her by the merchant's lady. The

singing-master was never to know that it was out ; it was he who had paid for Peer's support and education at Herr Gabriel's. From the evening when, at the merchant's house, he heard Peer sing the ballet "Samson," he alone had been his real friend and benefactor, but in secret.

(To be continued.)

LUCKY PEER.

BY HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

(Concluded from page 516.)

XI.

MADAM COURT expected Peer to visit her at her house, and he went there.

"Now you shall know my Court," said she, "and you shall make the acquaintance of my chimney-corner. I never dreamed of this when I danced in 'Circe' and 'The Rose Elf in Provence.' Indeed, there are not many now who think of that ballet and of little Frandsen. 'Sic transit gloria in the moon,' as they say in Latin. My Court is a witty

VOL. I.—40

fellow, and uses that phrase when I talk about my time of honor. He likes to poke fun at me, but he does it with a good heart."

The "chimney-corner" was an inviting low-studded room, with a carpet on the floor, and an endless lot of portraits for a book-binder to have. There was a picture of Gutenberg, and one of Franklin, of Shakspeare, Cervantes, Molière, and the two blind poets, Homer and Ossian. Lowest down, hung, glazed and in a broad frame, one cut out in

paper of a *danseuse*, with great spangles on a dress of gauze, the right leg lifted toward heaven, and written beneath a verse :—

“Who wins our hearts by her dancing?
Who of her wreath-trophies can sing,*
Mademoiselle Emilie Frandsen!”

It was written by Court, who wrote excellent verse, especially comic verse. He had himself clipped the picture out and pasted and sewed it before he got his first wife. It had lain many years in a drawer, now it flourished here in the poetic picture gallery; “my chimney-corner,” as Madam Court called her little room. Here were Peer and Court introduced to each other.

“Is he not a charming man?” said she to Peer. “To me he is just the most charming.”

“Ay, on a Sunday, when I am well bound in State clothes,” said Herr Court.

“You are charming without any binding,” said she, and then she tipped her head down as it came over her that she had spoken a little too childishly for one of her age.

“Old love does not rust,” said Herr Court. “An old house a-fire burns down to the ground.”

“It is as with the Phoenix,” said Madam Court; “one rises up young again. Here is my Paradise. I do not care at all to seek any other place, except an hour at your mother and grandmother’s.”

“And at your sister’s,” said Herr Court.

“No, angel Court; it is no longer any Paradise there. I must tell you, Peer, they live in narrow circumstances, but there is a great mingle-mangle about them for all that. No one knows what he dare say there in that house. One dare not mention the word ‘darkey,’ for the eldest daughter is beloved by one who has negro blood in him. One dare not say ‘hunchback,’ for that one of the children is. One dare not talk about ‘defalcation,’—my brother-in-law has been in that unfortunate way. One dare not even say that he has been driving in the wood: wood is an ugly sound, for it is just the same as

Woods, who fought with the youngest son. I don’t like to go out and sit and hold my tongue. I don’t dare talk, so I just come back to my own house and sit in my chimney-corner. Were it not too emphatic, as they say, I would gladly ask our Lord to let us live as long as my chimney-corner holds out, for there one grows better. Here is my Paradise, and this my Court has given me.”

“She has a gold mill in her mouth,” said he.

“And thou hast gold grain in thy heart,” said she.

“Grind, grind all the bag will hold,
Milly’s the grain, Milly’s pure gold,”

said he, as he chuckled her under the chin.

“That verse was written right on the spot! It ought to be printed!”

“Yes, and handsomely bound!” said he.

So these two old folks rallied each other.

A YEAR passed before Peer began to study a rôle at the theatre. He chose “Joseph,” but he changed it for “George Brown,” in the opera of “The White Lady.” The words and music he quickly made his own, and from Walter Scott’s romance, which had furnished the material for the opera, he obtained a clear, full picture of the young, spirited officer who visits his native hills and comes to his ancestral castle without knowing it; an old song wakens recollections of his childhood; fortune attends him, and he wins a castle and his wife.

What he read became as if something which he himself had lived—a chapter of his own life’s story. The music, rich in melodies, was entirely in keeping. There was meanwhile a long, very long time before the first rehearsals began. The singing-master did not mean that there should be any hurry about his appearance, and at length he too understood this. He was not merely a singer, he was an actor; and his whole being was thrown into his character. The chorus and the orchestra at the very first applauded him loudly, and the evening of the representation was looked forward to with the greatest expectation.

“One can be a great actor in a night-gown at home,” said a good-natured companion; “can be very great by daylight, but only

* It is but fair to say for the enthusiastic Court that he is not responsible for the disgraceful English rhymes. His Danish ones were built on Miss Frandsen’s name.—TRANS.

so-so before the lights in a full house. That you will see for yourself."

Peer had no anxiety, but a strong desire for the eventful evening. The singing-master, on the contrary, was quite feverish. Peer's mother had not the courage to go to the theatre; she would be ill with anxiety for her dear boy. Grandmother was sick, and must stay at home, the doctor had said; but the trusty friend Madam Court promised to bring the news the very same evening how it all went off. She should and would be at the theatre, even if she were to be in the last extremity.

How long the evening was! How the three or four hours stretched into eternity! Grandmother sang a psalm, and prayed with mother to the good God for their little Peer, that he might this evening also be Lucky Peer. The hands of the clock moved slowly.

"Now Peer is beginning," they said; "now he is in the middle; now he has passed it."

The mother and grandmother looked at one another, but they said never a word. In the streets there was the rumbling of carriages; people were driving home from the theatre. The two women looked down from the window; the people who were passing talked in loud voices; they were from the theatre, they knew, bringing good news or sorrow up into the garret of the merchant's house.

At last some one came up the stairs. Madam Court burst in, followed by her husband. She flung herself on the necks of the mother and grandmother, but said never a word. She cried and sobbed.

"Lord God!" said mother and grandmother. "How has it gone with Peer?"

"Let me weep!" said Madam Court, so overcome was she. "I cannot bear it. Ah! you dear good people, you cannot bear it either!" and her tears streamed down.

"Have they hissed him off?" cried the mother.

"No, no! not that!" said Madam Court. "They have—oh, that I should live to see it!"

Then both mother and grandmother fell to weeping.

"Be calm, Emilie," said Herr Court.

"Peer has been victorious! He has triumphed! The house came near tumbling down, they clapped him so. I can feel it still in my hands. It was one storm of applause from pit to gallery. The entire royal family clapped too. Really, it was what one may call a white day in the annals of the theatre. It was more than talent—it was genius!"

"Ay, genius," said Madam Court, "that is my word. God bless you, Court, that you spoke that word out. You dear good people, never would I have believed that one could so sing and act in comedy, and yet I have lived through a theatre's whole history." She cried again; the mother and grandmother laughed, whilst tears still chased down their cheeks.

"Now sleep well on that," said Herr Court; "and now come, Emilie. Good-night! good-night!"

They left the garret-chamber and two happy people there; but these were not long alone. The door opened, and Peer, who had not promised to come before the next forenoon, stood in the room. He knew well with what thoughts the old people had followed him; how ignorant, too, they still must be of his success, and so, as he was driving past with the singing-master, he stopped outside; there were still lights up in the chamber, and so he must needs go up to them.

"Splendid! glorious! superb! all went off well!" he exclaimed jubilantly, and kissed his mother and grandmother. The singing-master nodded with a bright face and pressed their hands.

"And now he must go home to rest," said he, and the visit was over.

"Our Father in Heaven, how gracious and good Thou art," said these two poor women. They talked long into the night about Peer. Round about in the great town people talked of him,—the young, handsome, wonderful singer. So far had Peer's fame gone.

XII.

THE morning papers mentioned the *début* with a great flourish of trumpets as something more than common, and the dramatic reviewer reserved till another number his

privilege of expressing his opinion. The merchant invited Peer and the singing-master to a grand dinner. It was an attention intended as a testimony of the interest which he and his wife felt in the young man, who was born in the house, and in the same year and on the very same day as their own son.

The merchant proposed the health of the singing-master, the man who had found and polished this "precious stone," a name by which one of the prominent papers had called Peer. Felix sat by his side and was the soul of gayety and affection. After dinner he brought out his own cigars; they were better than the merchant's; "he can afford to get them," said that gentleman; "he has a rich father." Peer did not smoke,—a great fault, but one that could easily be mended.

"We must be friends," said Felix. "You have become the lion of the town! all the young ladies, and the old ones too, for that matter, you have taken by storm. You are a lucky fellow all over. I envy you; especially that you can go in and out over there at the theatre, among all the little girls."

That did not now seem to Peer anything so very worthy of envy.

He had a letter from Madam Gabriel. She was in transports over the extravagant accounts in the papers of his *début*, and all that he was to become as an artist. She had drunk his health with her maids in a bowl of punch. Herr Gabriel also had a share in his honor, and was quite sure that he, beyond most others, spoke foreign words correctly. The apothecary ran about town and reminded everybody that it was at their little theatre they had first seen and been amazed at his talent, which was now for the first time recognized at the capital. "The apothecary's daughter would be quite out of conceit with herself," added Madam, "now that he could be courting Baronesses and Countesses." The apothecary's daughter had been in too much of a hurry and given in too soon; she had been betrothed, a month since, to the fat counsellor. The bans had been published, and they were to be married on the twentieth of the month.

It was just the twentieth of the month when Peer received this letter. He seemed

to himself to have been pierced through the heart. At that moment it was clear to him that, during all the vacillation of his soul, she had been his steadfast thought. He thought more of her than of all others in the world. Tears came into his eyes; he crumpled the letter in his hand. It was the first great grief of heart he had known since he heard, with mother and grandmother, that his father had fallen in the war. It seemed to him that all happiness had fled, and his future was dull and sorrowful. The sunlight no longer beamed from his youthful face; the sunshine was put out in his heart.

"He does not seem well," said mother and grandmother. "It is the wear and tear of that theatre life."

He was not the same as formerly, they both perceived, and the singing-master also saw it.

"What is the matter?" said he. "May I not know what troubles thee?"

At that his cheeks turned red, his tears flowed afresh, and he burst out with his sorrow, his loss.

"I loved her so earnestly!" said he. "Now, for the first time, when it is too late, I see it clearly."

"Poor, troubled friend! I understand thee so well. Weep freely before me, and hold fast by the thought, as soon as thou canst, that what happens in the world happens best for us. I too have known and felt what you now are feeling. I too once, like you, loved a girl; she was discreet, she was pretty and fascinating; she was to be my wife. I could offer her good circumstances, but one condition before the marriage her parents required, and she required: I must become a Christian—!"

"And that you would not?"

"I could not. One cannot, with an honest conscience, jump from one religion to another without sinning either against the one he takes leave of or the one he steps into."

"Have you no faith?" said Peer.

"I have the God of my fathers. He is a light for my feet and my understanding."

They sat for an hour silent, both of them, Then their hands glanced over the keys, and the singing-master played an old folk song.

Neither of them sang the words ; each made his own thoughts underlie the music. Madam Gabriel's letter was not again read. She little dreamed what sorrow it had carried.

A few days after there came a letter from Herr Gabriel ; he also wished to offer his congratulations and "a commission." It was this especially which had given occasion to the letter. He asked Peer to buy a little porcelain thing, namely, Amor and Hymen, Love and Marriage. "It is all sold out here in the town," he wrote, "but easily to be got in the capital. The money goes with this. Send the thing along as quickly as possible : it is a wedding present for the counsellor, at whose marriage I was with my wife." Finally Peer came to—"Young Madsen never will become a student : he has left the house, and has daubed the walls over with stale witticisms against the family. A hard subject that young Madsen. 'Sunt pueri pueri, pueri puerilia tractant !' i.e., 'Boys are boys, and boys do boyish things.' I translate it since you are not a Latinist," and with that Herr Gabriel's letter closed.

XIII.

SOMETIMES, when Peer sat at the piano, there sounded tones in it which stirred thoughts in his breast and head. The tones rose into melodies that now and then carried words along with them ; they could not be separated from song. Thus arose several little poems that were rhythmic and full of feeling. They were sung in a subdued voice. It was as if they were shy and timid in feeling, and moved in loneliness.

Like the wind our days are blown,
No tarrying place is here ;
From cheeks the roses have flown :
Perished the smile and the tear.

Wherefore, then, smitten with grief ?
Sorrow, too, taketh its flight,
Everything fades like the leaf,
Men and women, and daytime and night.

Vanishing, vanishing all !
Thy youth, thy hope, and thy friend.
Like the wind, they heed not thy call,
They vanish, nor turn back again.

"Where did you get that song and melody?"

asked the singing-master, who accidentally found the words and music written down.

"It came of itself, that and all this. They do not fly farther into the world."

"A downcast spirit sets out flowers too," said the singing-master, "but it dare not give counsel. Now we must set sail and steer for your next *début*. What do you say to Hamlet, the melancholy young Prince of Denmark?"

"I know Shakspeare's tragedy," said Peer, "but not yet Thomas's opera."

"The opera should be called Ophelia," said the singing-master. "Shakspeare has, in the tragedy, made the Queen tell us of Ophelia's death, and this is made to be the chief point in the musical rendering. One sees before his eyes, and feels in the tones, what before we could only learn from the narrative of the Queen."

"There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream ;
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them ;
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke ;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide ;
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up :
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes ;
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element ; but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death."

The opera brings all this before our eyes. We see Ophelia : she comes out playing, dancing, singing the old ballad about the mermaid that entices men down beneath the river, and while she sings and plucks the flowers the same tones are heard from the depths of the stream ; they sound in the voices that allure from the deep water ; she listens, she laughs, she draws near the brink, she holds fast by the overhanging willow and stoops to pluck the white water-lily ; gently she glides on to it, and singing, reclines on its broad leaves ; she swings with it, and is carried by the stream out into the deep, where, like the broken flower, she sinks in the moon-

light with the mermaid's melody welling forth about her.

In the entire scene it is as if Hamlet, his mother, his uncle, and the dead, avenging king alone were necessary to make the frame for the picture. We do not get Shakspeare's Hamlet, just as in the opera Faust we do not get Goethe's creation. The speculative is no material for music; it is the passionate element in both these tragedies which permits them to be rendered in a musical production.

The opera of Hamlet was brought on the stage. The actress who had Ophelia's part was admirable; the death scene was most effectively rendered; but Hamlet himself received on this evening a commensurate greatness, a fulness of character which grew with each scene in which he appeared. People were astonished at the compass of the singer's voice, at the freshness shown in the high as well as in the deep tones, and that he could with a like brilliancy of power sing Hamlet and George Brown.

The singing parts in most Italian operas are a patchwork in which the gifted singers, men and women, work in their soul and genius, and then, out of the variegated colors given them, construct shapes as the progress of the poem requires; how much more glorious, then, must they reveal themselves when the music is carried out through thoughts and characters; and this Gounod and Thomas have understood.

This evening at the theatre Hamlet's form was flesh and blood, and he raised himself into the position of the chief personage in the opera. Most memorable was the night scene on the ramparts where Hamlet, for the first time, sees his father's ghost; the scene in the castle, before the stage which has been erected, where he flings out the words that are drops of poison; the terrible meeting with his mother, where the father's ghost stands in avengeful attitude before the son; and finally, what might in the singing, what music at Ophelia's death! She became as a lotus flower upon the deep, dark sea, whose waves rolled with a mighty force into the soul of the spectators. Hamlet this evening became the chief personage. The triumph was complete.

"How came he by it!" said the merchant's rich wife, as she thought on Peer's parents and his grandmother up in the garret. The father had been a warehouse-man, clever and honorable; he had fallen as a soldier on the field of honor; the mother, a washer-woman,—but that does not give the son culture, and he grew up in a charity school,—and how much, in a period of two years, could a provincial schoolmaster instil into him of higher science.

"It is genius!" said the merchant. "Genius!—that is born of God's grace."

"Most certainly!" said his wife, and folded her hands reverently when she talked to Peer. "Do you feel humble in your heart at what you have received?" she asked. "Heaven has been unspeakably gracious to you. Everything has been given. You do not know how overpowering your Hamlet is. You have yourself created the representation. I have heard that many great poets do not themselves know the glory of what they have given; the philosophers must reveal it for them. Where did you get your conception of Hamlet?"

"I have thought over the character, have read a portion of what has been written about Shakspeare's work, and since, on the stage, I have entered into the person and his surroundings. I give my part and our Lord gives the rest."

"Our Lord," said she, with a half-reproving look. "Do not use that name. He gave you power, but you do not believe that he has anything to do with the theatre and opera!"

"Most assuredly I do!" said Peer, courageously. "There also does he have a pulpit for men, and most people hear better there than in church."

She shook her head. "God is with us in all good and beautiful things, but let us be careful how we take his name in vain. It is a gift of grace for one to be a great artist, but it is still better to be a good Christian." Felix, she felt, would never have named the theatre and the church together before her, and she was glad of that.

"Now you have laid yourself out against mamma!" said Felix, laughing.

"That was very far from my thoughts!"

"Don't trouble yourself about that. You will get into her good graces again next Sunday when you go to church. Stand outside her pew, and look up to the right, for there, in the balcony-pew, is a little face which is worth looking at—the widow-baroness's charming daughter. Here is a well-meant piece of advice, and I give it to you:—You cannot live where you are now. Move into larger lodgings, with the stairs in good order; or, if you won't leave the singing-master, then let him live in better style. He has means enough, and you have a pretty good income. You must give a party too, an evening supper. I could give it myself, and will give it, but you can invite a few of the little dancing girls. You're a lucky fellow! but I believe, heaven help me, that you don't yet understand how to be a young man."

Peer did understand it exactly in his own way. With his full, ardent young heart, he was in love with art; she was his bride, she returned his love, and lifted his soul into gladness and sunshine. The depression which had crushed him soon evaporated, gentle eyes looked upon him, and every one met him in a friendly and cordial manner. The amber-heart, which he still wore constantly on his breast, where grandmother once had hung it, was certainly a talisman, as he thought, for he was not quite free from superstition,—a child-like faith one may call it. Every nature that has genius in it has something of this, and looks to and believes in its star. Grandmother had shown him the power that lay in the heart, of drawing things to itself. His dream had shown him how, out from the amber-heart, there grew a tree which burst through garret and roof, and bore a thousand-fold of hearts and silver and gold; that surely betokened that in the heart, in his own warm heart, lay the might of his art, whereby he had won and still should win thousands upon thousands of hearts.

Between him and Felix there was undoubtedly a kind of sympathy, different as they were from each other. Peer assumed that the difference between them lay in this: that Felix, as the rich man's son, had grown up in temptations, and could afford to taste them and take his pleasure thus. He had, on the

contrary, been more fortunately placed as a poor man's son.

Both of these two children of the house were meanwhile growing up into eminence. Felix would soon be a Kammerjunker,* and that is the first step to being a Kammerherr,* as long as one has a gold key behind. Peer, always lucky, had already in his hand, though it was invisible, the gold key of genius, which opens all the treasures of the earth, and all hearts too.

XIV.

It was still winter-time. The sleigh-bells jingled, and the clouds carried snow-flakes in them, but when sunbeams burst through them there was a heralding of spring. There was a fragrance and a music in the young heart that flowed out in picturesque music and found expression in words.

A SPRING SONG.

In swath of snow the earth is lying,
Over the sea merry skaters are flying,
The frost-rimmed trees are specked with crows,
But to-morrow, to-morrow the winter-time goes.
The sun bursts through the heavy skies,
Spring comes riding in summer guise,†
And the willow pulls off its woollen glove.
Strike up, musicians, in leafy grove;
Little birds, little birds, sing in the sky,
Winter's gone by! winter's gone by!

O, warm is the kiss of the sun on our cheek,
As violets and stonewort in the woodland we seek:
'Tis as if the old forest were holding its breath,
For now in a night each leaf wakes from death.
The cuckoo sings! (you know its tell-tale song),
So many years your days will be long.‡
The world is young! be thou, too, young;
Let happy heart and merry tongue
With spring-time lift the song on high,
Youth's never gone by! never gone by!

* Titles of court attendants. The latter of these gentlemen wear in their court dress a gold key hanging by a ribbon at the back of the coat.

† It is a custom at Eastertide for the peasants to come riding into the towns and villages, their horses and themselves decked with green boughs, especially of the beech, and so they go in procession and have a merry dance in the evening; it is then said in the people's way,—“Spring is riding summer-wise into town.”

‡ It is a Scandinavian superstition that the first cuckoo one hears in the spring will answer the question,—“How many years shall I live?” by a prophetic number of notes. Many other questions are asked, and boys and girls will go out at night that in the early morning they may hear the cuckoo's answers.

Youth's never gone by ! never gone by !
 The earth lives a charmed life for aye,
 With its sun and its storm, its joy and its pain.
 So in our hearts a world has lain,
 That will not be gone, like a shooting star,
 For man is made like God afar,
 And God and Nature keep ever young.
 So teach us, Spring, the song thou'st sung,
 And pipe in, little birds in the sky,—
 " Youth's never gone by ! never gone by ! "

" That is a complete musical painting," said the singing-master, " and well adapted for chorus and orchestra. It is the best yet of your pieces which have sprung out of words. You certainly must learn thorough bass, although it is not your vocation to be a composer."

Some young music friends meanwhile quickly brought out the song at a great concert, where it excited remark but led to nothing. Our young friend's career was open before him. His greatness and importance lay not in the sympathetic tones of his voice, but in his remarkable dramatic power. This he had shown as George Brown and as Hamlet. He very much preferred the regular opera to the singing of pieces. It was contrary to his sound and natural sense, this stepping over from song to talking, and back to singing again.

" It is," said he, " as if one came from marble steps on to wooden ones, sometimes even on to mere hen-roosts, and then again to marble. The whole poem should live and breathe in its passage through tones."

The music of the future, which the new movement in opera is called, and of which Wagner is specially standard-bearer, received a response and strong admiration from our young friend. He found here characters so clearly marked, passages so full of thought, the entire handling characterized by forward movement, without any stand-still or recurrence of melodies. " It is surely a most unnatural thing, the introduction of arias."

" Yes, introduction," said the singing-master. " But how they, in the works of most of the great masters, stand prominently forth, a large part of the whole ! So must and should it be. If the lyric has a home in any place, it is in the opera ;" and he mentioned in Don Juan, Don Octavio's aria, " Tears,

cease your flowing." " How like is it to a charming lake in the woods, by whose bank one rests and is filled to the brim with the music that streams through the leafy woods ! I pay my respects to the profundity that lies in the new musical movement, but I do not dance with you before that golden calf. Nor is it your heart's real meaning which you express, or else you are not yourself quite clear about it."

" I will appear in one of Wagner's operas," said our young friend. " If I cannot show my meaning by the words, yet I will by my singing and acting."

The choice fell on Lohengrin, the young mysterious knight who, in the boat drawn by swans, glides over the Scheldt to do battle for Elsa of Brabant. Who so well as he ever acted and sang the first song of the meeting, the conversation of two hearts in the bridal chamber, and the song of farewell when the holy Grail's white dove hovers about the young knight, who came, won—and vanished ? This evening was, if possible, another step forward in the artistic greatness and celebrity of our young friend, and to the singing-master it was a step forward in the recognition of the music of the future—

" Under certain conditions," he said.

XV.

AT the great yearly exhibition of paintings, Peer and Felix one day met before the portrait of a young and pretty lady, daughter of the widow-baroness, as the mother was generally called, whose salon was the rendezvous for the world of distinction and for every one of eminence in art and science. The young baroness was in her sixteenth year, an innocent, charming child. The picture was a good likeness and given with artistic skill.

" Step into the saloon here close by," said Felix. " There stands the young beauty with her mother."

They stood engaged in looking at a characteristic picture. It represented a field where two young married people came riding on the same horse, holding fast to one another. The chief figure meanwhile was a young monk who was looking at the two happy travelers. There was a sorrowful dreamy look in the young

man's countenance ; one could read in it his thought, the story of his life ; an aim missed, great happiness lost ! human happiness in human love he had not won.

The elder baroness saw Felix, who respectfully greeted her and the beautiful daughter. Peer showed the same customary politeness. The widow-baroness knew him immediately from having seen him on the stage, and after speaking to Felix she said some friendly, obliging words to Peer as she pressed his hand.

"I and my daughter belong to your admirers."

What perfect beauty seemed to possess the young girl at this moment ! She looked with her gentle, clear eyes almost gratefully upon him.

"I see in my house," continued the widow-baroness, "very many of the most distinguished artists. We common people stand in need of a spiritual airing. You will be heartily welcome. Our young diplomat," she pointed to Felix, "will show you the way the first time, and afterward I hope that you will find the way yourself."

She smiled on him. The young girl reached out her hand naturally and cordially, as if they had long known each other.

Later in the autumn, one cold, sleety evening, the two young men went as they had been invited. It was weather for driving and not walking in for the rich man's son, and for the first singer on the stage. Nevertheless they walked, well wrapped up, with galoshes on their feet and rough caps on their heads.

It was like a complete fairy scene to come out from the raw air into the apartment displaying such luxury and good taste. In the vestibule, before the carpeted stairs, there was a great display of flowers among bushes and fan-palms. A little fountain plashed in the basin, which was surrounded by tall callas.

The great salon was beautifully lighted, and a great part of the company had already gathered. Soon there was almost a crowd. People trod on silk trains and laces ; there was a hum round about of conversation's sonorous mosaic, which, on the whole, was the least worth while of all the splendor there.

Had Peer been a vain fellow, which he was not, he could have imagined that it was a feast made for him, so cordial was the reception which he met from the mistress of the house and the beaming daughter. Young ladies and old, yes, and gentlemen with them, said most agreeable things to him.

There was music. A young author read a well-written poem. There was singing, and true delicacy was shown in that no one urged our young and honored singer to make the whole affair most complete. The lady of the house was the observing hostess, full of spirits and full of hospitality in that elegant salon.

It was his introduction into the great world, and our young friend was soon here also one of the select ones in the choice family circle. The singing-master shook his head and smiled.

"How young thou art, dear friend," said he, "that thou canst enjoy going among these people. They can be good enough in and for themselves ; but they look down on us plain citizens. For some of them it is only a piece of vanity, an amusement, and for others a sort of mark of exclusive culture when they receive into their circle artists and the lions of the day. These belong in the salon much as the flowers in the vase, they wither and then they are thrown away."

"How harsh and unkind," said Peer. "You do not know these people, and you judge of them."

"No," answered the singing-master. "I am not at home with them, nor are you either, and this they all remember and know. They caress you and look at you just as they pat and look at a race-horse that is to win a wager. You belong to another race than they. They will let you go when you are no longer in the fashion. Do you not understand that ? You are not proud enough. You are vain, and you show that by seeking these people."

"How very differently you would talk and judge," said Peer, "if you knew the widow-baroness and a few of my friends there."

"I shall not get to knowing them," said the singing-master.

"When is the engagement to come out ?" asked Felix one day. "Is it the mother or

the daughter?" and he laughed. "Don't take the daughter, for then you'll have all the young nobility against you, and I too shall be your enemy, and the fiercest one."

"What do you mean?" asked Peer.

"You are the most favored one. You can go out and in at all hours. You'll get the cash along with the mother, and belong to a good family."

"Stop your joking," said Peer. "There is nothing amusing to me in what you say."

"No indeed, there is no fun at all in it," said Felix. "It is a most serious matter, for you'll not let her grace sit and weep and be a double widow."

"Leave the baroness out of your talk," said Peer. "Make yourself merry over me if you want to, but over me alone, and I will answer you."

"No one will believe that it is a love match on your side," continued Felix. "She is a little outside of the line of beauty—one does not live on spirit alone!"

"I gave you credit for more refinement and good sense," said Peer, "than would let you talk thus of a lady you ought to esteem, and whose house you visit, and I won't talk of this longer."

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Felix. "Will you fight?"

"I know that you have learned that, and I have not, but I can learn," and he left Felix.

A day or two afterward the two children of the house met again, the son from the first floor and the son from the garret. Felix talked to Peer as if no quarrel had risen between them. He answered courteously, but curtly too.

"What is the matter now!" said Felix. "We two were a little irritable lately, but one may have his joke without being flayed for it; so let us forget and forgive."

"Can you forgive yourself the manner in which you spoke of a lady to whom we both owe great respect?"

"I spoke very frankly!" said Felix. "In fine society one may talk with a razor-edge, but that is not thought an ill thing. It is the salt for the tasteless every-day fish dinner, as the poet calls it. We are all just a little wicked. You can also let a drop fall, my

friend; a little drop of innocence which makes one smart."

So they were soon seen arm in arm. Felix well knew that more than one pretty young lady who would otherwise have passed him by without seeing him, now noticed him since he was walking with the "Ideal of the Stage." Lamp-light always casts a glamour over the theatre's hero and lover. It still shines about him when he shows himself on the street, in day-light, but is generally rather extinguished then. Most of the artists of the stage are like swans; one should see them in their element, not on the paving stones or the public promenade. There are exceptions, however, and to these belonged our young friend. His appearance apart from the stage never disturbed the conception one had of him as George Brown, or Hamlet, or Lohengrin. It was the form associated thus with poetry or music that many a young heart made to be the same with the man himself, and exalted into the ideal. He knew that it was thus, and found a kind of pleasure in it. He was happy in his art, and in the means he possessed of exercising it, yet there would come a shadow over the joyous young face, and from the piano sounded the melody with the words:—

Vanishing—vanishing all!

Thy youth, thy hope, and thy friend.

Like the wind, they heed not thy call,

They vanish, nor turn back again.

"How mournful!" said the widow-baroness. "You have happiness in full measure. I know no one who is so happy as you."

"Call no one happy before he is in his grave, the wise Solon said," replied he, and smiled through his seriousness; "it were a wrong, a sin, if I were not thankful and glad of heart. I am thus. I am thankful for what is intrusted to me, but I myself set a different value on this from what others do. It is a beautiful piece of fireworks which shoots off and then is all out. The actor's work thus vanishes out of knowledge. The everlasting shining stars may be forgotten for the meteors of a moment, but when these are extinguished, there is no living trace of them except by the old signs. A new generation does not know and cannot picture to itself those

who delighted their fathers from the stage ; youth, perhaps, applauds splendor and brass as delightedly and as loudly as the old folks once did splendor and true gold. Far more fortunately placed than the scenic artist are the poet, the sculptor, the painter and the composer. They may in the struggle of life experience hard fortune and miss the merited appreciation, while those who exhibit their works, as the actor and the musician, live in luxury and proud state. Let the many stand and gaze at the bright-colored cloud and forget the sun, yet the cloud vanishes, the sun shines and beams for new generations."

He sat at the piano and improvised with a richness of thought and a power such as he never before had shown.

"Wonderfully beautiful!" broke in the widow-baroness. "'Twas as if I heard the story of a whole life-time. You gave your heart's canticle in the music."

"I thought of the Thousand and one Nights," said the young girl, "of the lamp of fortune, of Aladdin," and she looked with pure, dewy eyes upon him.

"Aladdin!" he repeated.

This evening was the turning-point in his life. A new section surely began.

What was befalling him this flitting year? His fresh color forsook his cheeks; his eyes shone far more clearly than before. He passed sleepless nights, but not in wild orgies, in revels and rioting, as so many great artists. He became less talkative, but more cheerful.

"What is it that fills you so?" said his friend the singing master. "You do not confide all to me!"

"I think how fortunate I am!" he replied—"I think of the poor boy! I think of—Aladdin."

XVI.

MEASURED by the expectations of a poor-born child, Peer now led a prosperous, agreeable life. He was so well to do that, as Felix once said, he could give a good party to his friends. He thought of it, and thought of his two earliest friends, his mother and grandmother. For them and himself he provided a festival.

It was charming spring weather; the two

old people must drive with him out of town and see a little country place which the singing master had lately bought. As he was about seating himself in the carriage, there came a woman, humbly clad, about thirty years old; she had a begging paper recommending her signed by Madam Court.

"Don't you know me?" said she. "Little Curly-head, they used to call me. The curls are gone, there is so much that is gone, but there are still good people left. We two have appeared together in the ballet. You have become better off than I. You have become a great man. I am now separated from two husbands and no longer at the theatre."

Her "paper" begged that she might come to own a sewing-machine.

"In what ballet have we two performed together?" asked Peer.

"In the 'Tyrant of Padua,'" she replied. "We were two pages, in blue velvet and feathered cap. Do you not remember little Malle Knallerup? I walked just behind you in the procession."

"And stepped on the side of my foot!" said Peer, laughing.

"Did I?" said she. "Then I took too long a step. But you have gone far ahead of me. You have understood how to use your legs in your head," and she looked with her melancholy face coquettishly and with a sinister per at him, quite sure she had passed a witty compliment. Peer was a generous fellow. She should have the sewing-machine, he promised. Little Malle had indeed been one of those who especially drove him out of the ballet into a more fortunate career.

He stopped soon outside the merchant's house, and stepped up-stairs to his mother and grandmother. They were in their best clothes, and had accidentally a visit from Madam Court, who was at once invited to join them, whereupon she had a sore struggle with herself, which ended in her sending a messenger to Herr Court to inform him that she had accepted the invitation.

"Peer gets all the fine salutations," said she.

"How stylishly we are driving!" said mother; "And in such a roomy, great carriage," said grandmother. Near the town,

close by the royal park, stood a little cozy house, surrounded by vines and roses, hazels and fruit-trees. Here the carriage stopped. This was the country-seat. They were received by an old woman, well known to mother and grandmother; she had often helped them in their washing and ironing.

The garden was visited, and they went over the house. There was one specially charming thing—a little glass house, with beautiful flowers in it. It was connected with the sitting-room. There was a sliding door in the wall.

"That is just like a *coulisse*," said Madam Court. "It moves by hand; and one can sit here just as in a bird-cage, with chickweed all about. It is called a winter-garden."

The sleeping-chamber was also very delightful after its kind. Long, close curtains at the windows, soft carpets, and two arm-chairs, so commodious that mother and grandmother must needs try them.

"One would get very lazy sitting in them," said mother.

"One loses his weight," said Madam Court. "Ah! here you two music people can swim easily enough through the seas of intellectual labor. I have been a witness to your own believe me. The room makes *battements* at my feet. It is charming—two souls and a light."

"There is fresher air here, and more room, than in the two small rooms up in the garret," said Peer with beaming eyes.

"That there is," said mother. "Still home is so good. There did I bear thee, my sweet boy, and lived with thy father."

"It is better here," said grandmother. "Here there are all the conveniences of a rich man's place. I do not grudge you and that noble man the singing-master this home of peace."

"Then I do not grudge it to you, grandmother, and you, dear blessed mother. You two shall always live here, and not, as in town, go up so many steps, and be in such narrow and close quarters. You shall have a servant to help you, and see me as often as in town. Are you glad at this? Are you content with it?"

"What is all this the boy stands here and says!" said mother.

"The house, the garden, all are thine, mother, and thine, grandmother. It is for this I have labored to lay up money. My friend the singing-master has faithfully helped me by getting it ready."

"What is all this you are saying, child?" burst forth the mother. "Will you give us a gentleman's seat? My dearest boy, thou wouldst do it if thou couldst."

"It is all true," said he. "The house is thine and grandmother's." He kissed them both; they burst into tears, and Madam Court shed quite as many.

"It is the happiest moment of my life!" exclaimed Peer, as he embraced them all.

And now they had to see everything all over again, since it was their own. In place of their row of five or six plants in pots out on their roof, they now had this beautiful little conservatory. Instead of a little closet they had here a great roomy pantry, and the kitchen itself was a complete little warm chamber. The chimney had an oven and cooking-stove; it looked like a great shining box iron, said mother.

"Now you two have at last a chimney corner just like me!" said Madam Court. "It is royal here. You have got all that man can get on this earth, and you too, my own courted friend."

"Not all!" said Peer.

"To be sure the little wife comes!" said Madam Court. "I have her already for you. I have her in my feeling! but I shall keep my mouth shut. Thou noble man! Is it not like a ballet, all this?" She laughed with tears in her eyes, and so did mother and grandmother.

XVII.

To write the text and music for an opera, and be himself the interpreter of his own work on the stage, this was his great aim. Our young friend had a talent in common with Wagner, in that he could himself construct the dramatic poem; but had he, like him, the fulness of musical power so that he could fashion a musical work of any significance?

Courage and doubt alternated in him. He could not dismiss this constant thought from his mind. A year and a day since had it shone

forth as a picture of fancy ; now it was a possibility, an end in his life. Many free fancies were welcomed at the piano as birds of passage from that country of Perhaps. The little romances, the characteristic spring song gave promise of the still undiscovered land of *tone*. The widow-baroness saw in them the sign of promise, as Columbus saw it in the fresh green weed which the currents of the sea bore toward him before he saw the land itself on the horizon.

Land was there ! The child of fortune should reach it. A word thrown out was the seed of thought. She, the young, pretty, innocent girl spoke the word—Aladdin.

A fortune-child like Aladdin was our young friend. This was the light that broke into him. With this light he read and re-read the beautiful oriental story ; soon it took dramatic form : scene after scene grew into words and music, and the more it grew the richer came the music thoughts ; at the close of the work it was as if the well of *tone* were now for the first time pierced, and all the abundant fresh water gushed forth. He composed his work anew, and in stronger form, months afterward, arose the opera Aladdin.

No one knew of this work ; no one heard any measures at all of it, not even the most sympathetic of all his friends, the singing-master. No one at the theatre, when of an evening the young singer with his voice and his remarkable playing entranced the public, had a thought that the young man who seemed so to live and breathe in his rôle, lived far more intensely, ay, for hours afterward, lost himself in a mighty work of music that flowed forth from his own soul.

The singing-master had not heard a bar of the opera Aladdin before it was laid upon his table for examination, complete in notes and text. What judgment would be passed ? Assuredly a strong and just one. The young composer passed from highest hope to the thought that the whole thing was only a self-delusion.

Two days passed by, and not a word was interchanged about this important matter. At length the singing-master stood before him with the score in his hands, that now he knew. There was a peculiar seriousness spread over

his face that would not let his mind be guessed.

"I had not expected this," said he. "I had not believed it of you. Indeed, I am not yet sure of my judgment : I dare not express it. Here and there there are faults in the instrumentation, faults that can easily be corrected. There are single things, bold and novel, that one must hear under fair conditions. As there is with Wagner a working over of Carl Maria Weber, so there is noticeable in you a breath of Haydn. That which is new in what you have given is still somewhat far off from me, and you yourself are too near for me to give an exact judgment. I would rather not judge. I would embrace you !" he burst out with a rush of gladness "How came you to do this !" and he pressed him in his arms. "Happy man !"

There was soon a rumor through the town, in the newspapers and in society gossip, of the new opera by the young singer, whom all the town was flattering.

"He's a poor tailor who could not put together a child's trousers out of the scraps left over on his board," said one and another.

"Well, the text, compose it, and sing it himself," was all that was said. "That is a three-fold genius. The opera is still higher—in a genre."

"There are two at it, the singing-master," they said. "Now the opera will beat the signal-trumpet of the new association society."

The opera was given out for study. Those who took part would not give any opinion. "It shall not be said that it is judged from the theatre," said they ; and almost all put on a serious face that did not let any expectation of good show itself.

"There are a good many horns in the piece," said a young man who played that instrument, and also composed. "Well if he doesn't run a horn into himself !" *

"It has genius, it is sparkling, full of melody and character"—that also was said.

"To-morrow at this time," said Peer, "the scaffold will be raised. The judgment is, perhaps, already passed."

* Alluding to a Danish popular phrase, in which a man is supposed to gore himself.

"Some say that it is a masterpiece," said the singing-master; "others, that it is a mere patchwork."

"And wherein lies truth?"

"Truth!" said the singing-master. "Pray show me. Look at that star yonder. Tell me exactly where its place is. Shut one eye. Do you see it? Now look at it with the other only. The star has shifted its place. When each eye in the same person sees so differently, how variously must the great multitude see!"

"Happen what may," said our young friend, "I must know my place in the world, understand what I can and must put forth, or give up."

The evening came,—the evening of the representation. A popular artist was to be exalted to a higher place, or plunged down in his gigantic, proud effort. A shot or a drop! The matter concerned the whole city. People stood all night in the street before the ticket-office to secure places. The house was crammed full; the ladies came with great bouquets. Would they carry them home again, or cast them at the victor's feet?

The widow-baroness and the young, beautiful daughter sat in a box above the orchestra. There was a stir in the audience, a murmuring, a movement, as if some one as the leader of the orchestra took his place and the music began.

"I do not remember Henselt's piece—*l'espace j'étais*," that is like a twittering of birds? This was something akin; merry playing children, happy child-voices; the cuckoo gave its note with them, the thrush struck in. It was the play and carol of innocent childhood, the mind of Aladdin. Then there rolled in upon it a thunderstorm; Nourreddin displayed his power; a flash of lightning rent the rocks; gentle beckoning tones followed, a sound from the enchanted grotto where the lamp shone in the petrified cavern, while the wings of mighty spirits brooded over it. Now there sounded forth, in the notes of a bugle, a psalm so gentle and soft as if it came from the mouth of a child; a single horn was heard and then another, more and more were blended in the same tones, and rose in fullness and power as if they were the trumpets of the judgment day. The lamp was in

Aladdin's hand, and there swelled forth a sea of melody and majesty as if the ruler of spirits and master of music held sway.

The curtain rolled up in a storm of applause which sounded like a *fanfare* under the conductor's baton. A grown-up boy played there, so big and yet so simple,—it was Aladdin who frolicked among the other boys. Grandmother would at once have said:—

"That is Peer, as he played and jumped about between the stove and the chest of drawers at home in the garret. He is not a year older in his soul!"

With what faith and earnest prayer he sang the prayer Nourreddin bade him offer before he stepped down into the crevice to obtain the lamp. Was it the pure religious melody, or the innocence with which he sung, that drew all hearts after him? The applause was unbounded.

It would have been a profane thing to have repeated the song. It was called for, but it was not given. The curtain fell,—the first act was ended.

Every critic was speechless; people were overcome with gladness—they could only speak out their gratitude.

A few chords from the orchestra, and the curtain rose. The strains of music, as in Gluck's "*Armida*," and Mozart's "*Magic Flute*," arrested the attention of each; as the scene was disclosed where Aladdin stood in the wonderful garden, a soft subdued music sounded from flowers and stones, from springs and deep caverns, different melodies blending in one great harmony. A *susurrus* of spirits was heard in the chorus; it was now far off, now near, swelling in might and then dying away. Borne upon this unison was the monologue of Aladdin; what one indeed calls a great aria, but so entirely in keeping with character and situation that it was a necessary dramatic part of the whole. The resonant, sympathetic voice, the intense music of the heart subdued all listeners, and seized them with a rapture that could not rise higher, when he reached forth for the lamp that was fanned by the song of the spirits.

Bouquets rained down from all sides, a carpet of living flowers was spread out before his feet.

What a moment of life for the young artist,—the highest, the greatest! A mightier one could never again be granted him, he felt. A wreath of laurel glanced upon his breast and fell down before him. He had seen from whose hand it came. He saw the young girl in the box nearest the stage, the young baroness, rising like a Genius of Beauty, singing a pæan over his triumph.

A fire rushed through him, his heart swelled as never before, he bowed, took the wreath, pressed it against his heart, and at the same

moment fell backward.—Fainted? dead?—What was it?—The curtain fell.

“Dead!” ran the word through the house. Dead in the moment of triumph, like Sophocles at the Olympian Games, like Thorwaldsen in the theatre during Beethoven's symphony. An artery in his heart had burst, and as by a flash of lightning his day here was ended, ended without pain, ended in an earthly jubilee, in the fulfilment of his mission on earth. Lucky Peer! More fortunate than millions!

THE END.

NATASQUA

NATASQUA.

CHAPTER I.

"THAT was twenty-five years ago, Dick. But there was a secret in that story of your birth that I ken't puzzle out yet."

Richard gave the boat an impatient jibe. "Let's call it a disgrace, and be done with it," he said, in his abrupt dogmatic tone. "A man's a fool that has any mysteries in his life nowadays. Like a cheap play!"

Old Inskip pulled up the centre-board uncertainly, and let it down again. His fingers, with the rest of his spare old body, had hesitated and deliberated all through his tardy life. "Luff, Dick! I think I'd like to say a word or two to you before we land."

Richard nodded, and steered the boat out into the channel. He went on for a while, calculating silently how many oysters would be needed for planting next week, and then, glancing at the old man's anxious face, his eyes began to twinkle. Usually he left his old comrade the two or three hours he required for the incubation of an idea; but this subject had galled the good-natured young fellow a little, and had better, he thought, be put out of the way at once.

"There's no use of trying to put the word or two so that it won't hurt me, sir. That old story don't matter to me a whit; not the weight of a straw. When I was a romantic cub of fifteen I used rather to hug myself on

the idea of being a foundling. But I've no time for such follies now. I've never felt the need of a father or mother."

Inskip rubbed his hairy legs with the palms of his hands. "Haven't you, Dick?" he hesitated, looking at the other shore.

"God knows I haven't, sir!" heartily. Dick clapped his big hand on the other man's shoulder, shaking every bone in his body. "There's not a young fellow on the coast whose father and mother have done for him what you have done for me. You know that. Now let's be done with that old matter. As for a father and mother that I never saw, they are not of so much importance to me as—as this boat here. How could they be?"

Inskip looked at him doubtfully as Dick began to whistle, interrupting himself presently with—"What did De Conce offer for the oysters?"

"Two, or two-twenty."

The boat pushed along, muddying and cutting the fungus-like growth of sea-weeds beneath. Boat or horse must go like steam express under Richard's guidance. He would have gone post-haste over the Styx, good-naturedly inventing a better tiller for Charon as he went, and giving him gratuitous hints in navigation. Inskip, according to his custom, sat watching him, looking, in his bare legs and arms, and leathery shirt and trousers,

like a bony continuation of the wooden bow. Nothing could be so manly in his eyes as the boy's broad bluff figure and decisive face, yet a vague doubt hung hazy in his brain of shallowness. Shallowness. Were oyster-beds and New York trade, and the boat, the real things after all? To the old fisherman, who had never had wife or child, the dim ghosts of this father and mother; the mysterious untold story of birth and death; the inexplicable sweet danger of love, some day coming to Dick, were the actual matters of life. Though, if you were to talk to Inskip for years, he would serve you with no better matter than plans for fishing, or thin, pointless stories borrowed entire from his grandfather, the sole contribution the Inskip family were likely to make to the world of thought.

There was a necessity for him to speak to the point now, however, and at once, as they were pushing rapidly in-shore.

"I must go back to that old story once more, Richard."

"Very well, sir. Will you haul in that sheet?"

"The woman who brought you here said your mother and father were dead. She did not tell even me more than that, though she knew I would take you when she died. Three years ago I had a letter, sending money. It was from your mother."

"What did you do with it?" sharply.

"I sent it back, Richard."

"Right." Dick began to whistle again to keep his tongue still. He would not reproach Inskip. But, with his propensity for managing other people's affairs, it was hard on him that his own should have been taken out of his hands. He would have liked to deal with this woman who had entailed her guilt on him at birth, deserted him till now, and was coming thus late to shame him.

"There is something else, Richard. I had a letter from her the other day. It was not dated nor signed. It only said that your mother would be here this summer, and begged that you would not leave the beach."

Dick for a while silently pulled and wound his ropes. "If she comes, leave me to meet her," he said at last, quietly. He did not ask to see the letter, but jumped on shore. "I'll

go and settle that job with De Conce," nodding good-by, pleasantly, as he walked off. This business of his mother he had also settled and set aside. Inskip looked after him with a queer quizzical smile. Were love and passion, remorse, death itself, jobs which Dick could attack with his shrewd eyes, and hat cocked on one side, sort, label, and clap on the shelf as finished? The old man could not put his thoughts into words, even to himself, but he remembered vaguely a carpenter he had seen once finishing off a lot of coffins, dismissing each with a nod of satisfaction. He loosened the sail and drifted out into the current, while Dick's stout swinging figure, in its sacque and trousers of brown tweed, and jaunty cap atop, went steadily across the marsh, in sharp relief against the far horizon. It seemed to have absorbed into itself all the energy of the hot sleeping landscape.

The Natasqua hardly deserves to be called a river. It is one of those openings into our rocky coast through which the sea stretches its groping fingers on the hills, and lays upon them the spell of its own loneliness and quiet. Inskip floated along the banks of red clay which edged the water; the wind hardly stirred the bit of blue tape hanging down from his hat; the fields of feathery wild carrot belting the shore glared white in the afternoon sun; the brownish ledges of hills rose tier beyond tier, shutting him in from a world of which he never had known anything, and the water, tea-colored on the surface, and cold and brackish on the hottest day, sunk in sombre, impenetrable depths beneath him. It was one of those out-of-the-way corners of the world where Nature seems to carry on her secret silent processes of healing and of birth; where we dimly know that, if our souls were cleaner and eyes clearer, we might come some day suddenly upon the great Mother unawares at her eternal renewing work.

"It's curious," thought Inskip, "that the boy kin think of tradin' in oysters here." Dick, being an educated man, could have put the peculiar meaning of the place into better words—if he had ever seen it. But he never had. Inskip paddled along, thinking, if Dick's mother could meet him here, all would go well between them: her sin would somehow

fall off from her; the boy's heart would go out to her full of love and forgiveness. The place was awful in its inexpressible beauty and quiet; he felt vaguely that human souls in it lay bare and naked before God. The old fellow, who was chosen by the men thereabouts to settle their disputes, because of his dry, shrewd sense, was full of a lax, pitiful tenderness for all women-folks, for which the sharp-nosed, contented fishermen's wives seldom made call upon him. He had fallen into the habit, therefore, for years, of prosing to himself about this unknown mother of Dick's, and lavishing it upon her, set apart, as she was, from others by a great crime and a great punishment.

Dick, jumping over the fences of the marsh, looked at the affair in a different light. It was not an uncommon thing, he knew, out in the world, for a certain class of children to be put out of the way; he might be thankful that he had not been disposed of in a more summary fashion. And Master Dick was quite aware of the loss to the world if he had been choked off prematurely in his cradle. He had not done badly with his life so far, beginning as the charity child of a poor crab-fisher; what with a turn as peddler, photographer, school and books at every moment that could be spared from work, and now his oyster and clam farms, in which he had at last become master and director of other men.

"The land belongs to the man with money," he had told Inskip, "but the water to the man with wit to use it."

Dick's course brought him to the river again, which made a sudden turn, as sharp as a V. The sun was down by this time. The cedars, gray with their gummy berries, began to gloom in the cool shadows. There was a bar of rippling, golden light across the water. On the yellow sands a woman was picking up bits of kelp. Dick went up to her.

"It dries into different shades of brown, they tell me," said she, by way of good evening.

"Very likely. I don't know. It makes poor manure. Though I have an idea," kicking it critically, "if the essence was extracted—as they do with moss-bunkers." Dick stopped with an awkward laugh. For the first time in

his life, perhaps, it occurred to him that the wisdom and information with which he was brimful was overflowing inopportunately, though the girl's soft eyes were fixed on him attentively.

"What does she know of moss-bunkers or manure either?" sitting down to watch her. The dark water behind her slowly kindled into a sheet of pale color—subdued pink and violet; a blue heron swooped down black and sharp over the glassy surface, and was gone; the locusts droned on in an unknown tongue their song of sleep and summer. Her walk up and down the beach was leisurely and drowsy; the soft brown bathing-dress clung to her rounded limbs; there was an edge of scarlet about her full white throat and uncoiled hair; now and then she held up a weed or shell, asking him to praise it with her smiling, appealing eyes. The woman and all that she owned were made to be praised and petted, Dick thought, with a novel compassionate swelling at his heart, which he had never given before to any helpless baby. The opaline water, the heaps of ash-colored kelp, the unseen wailing sea, were only manure and fishing-ground to Dick; but the sense of beauty, the new feeling of rest akin to pain which came to old Inskip through them, had reached this full-blooded dogmatic young fellow through the girl, for the first time in his life. Dick's life threatened to be a stifling chamber of trade and barter; but there would be one crack at least through which the light could creep that lay in broad, unpriced sunshine about some other men.

Dick was ready enough in dealing with men; he had a simple downright habit of knowing his rights, and taking them, which blunted the sharpest New York traders; but of women and society he knew no more than he did of babies; looked, indeed, upon them as denizens of an overgrown nursery. He did not notice that the dress which clung to this woman was of delicate make and stuff, as high-bred and æsthetic a triumph in its way as a fine picture. He knew that she was one of the city people who came down for a whim to tent on the beach. Two or three days before he had found her too far out in Inskip's boat, trying to crab, and had waded out and pulled her to shore, explaining her mistake as they

went. "I am Richard Dort," he said, as he climbed up, dripping, on the bank to help her out.

She looked at him. She had been going to thank him, but she only said instead, "I am Romaine Vaux," and went on to the tent. Miss Vaux's eyes looked at everybody with the same babyish soft appeal; but the peculiarity about them was that you could not shake them off when she was gone. They stayed with Dick oddly; he fancied them steady and searching; weighing, labelling him at his value. Richard had met her once or twice since, and they had talked of the fishing and marl.

It was growing dark when she tied her kelp into a bundle; the jelly-fish, in luminous blobs, rose here and there in the sheet of dark water, kernels of soft white fire. "I must go home," she said.

It seemed quite natural to Richard to walk beside her, and he did it naturally, as few city-bred men would have the art to do. To be sure, she was not like the raw-boned women he knew, in their sleazy pink calicoes, but as for any difference of rank between her and them, it never occurred to him that there was any. He was a man, and they were women; that was all there was about it.

They came in sight of the tents. Natasqua beach was the fashion that summer in the New York set to which the Vaux's belonged. There was a gay little camp on the sands, beside a cottage in which boarders were taken.

"That is my father's—Major Vaux's—tent, beside which the fire is burning."

"I will give the Colonel some hints, then, about building his fire to leeward," said Dick. Miss Vaux smiled and nodded to the strollers they met, who glanced furtively at the young crab-fisher beside her, with his bare feet and cool, good-humored swagger. Dick, meanwhile, was wondering if his mother was among any of these groups. She was most probably a servant or housekeeper, whom some of these city people had brought down. What if she were to come out and proclaim the shame of his birth before Romaine? He had not felt before how the girl had embodied to him all there was of chasteness and modesty in the world.

"I think I will go back," he said, stopping short, a fierce throb at his heart.

"I want you to go on with me," with an amused twist in her babyish mouth. She had told her stepmother that very afternoon about Dick. She told her everything; colored, altered, lied a little sometimes to amuse the meagre, anxious little woman, who found it such hard work for her tired legs to keep step with that corps of heavy dragoons—Major Vaux and his four sons.

"The crab-fisher, after he had dragged me to land, told me his name quite as if we had been equals," she had said; "and I began to think we were."

"You ought to be careful, Romy," piped Mrs. Vaux. "Your dear father might not like such an acquaintance. He could not possibly make any use of a man like that. Could he?"

Romy made no answer. She held her stepmother's hand between her own plump pink palms, stroking it. The thin, blue-nailed fingers were loaded with showy rings. Mrs. Vaux, who would have been draped in drab if she had her way, wore an inexplicable clothing of scarlet and green flying fringes, tassels, an Arab mantle, wisps of false hair hanging dishevelled, according to the highest art of the coiffeur, about her lean rasped face.

"Do you like this costume, Romy?" she said, anxiously. "It was one of those your dear father designed himself, and ordered from Storm. He said the colors would suit the clear sky to-day."

"Nothing in it is so becoming as your wearing it, mother," she said gently. "How was Storm paid, by-the-by?"

"In puffs, my dear. Oh, very well paid, of course!" eagerly. "You did not think your father was still in debt to him? He wrote a copy of verses for the *Family Journal* on Storm's show-rooms, and embodied descriptions of two of my costumes in letters from Long Branch and Newport. Oh, he was amply remunerated! You would not allow your father to design one dress for you?"

"I did not need any," dryly. "But to return to my crab-fisher," with a sudden gayety that seemed a little forced.

"Here is your father coming!" with a

breathless pass of her hand over flounces and wisps of hair. I must tell him the circumstance, Romy. It is intolerable to him if we do not place confidence in him." Romy, who dared not send a pair of stockings to the laundress without the gallant Major's knowledge, nodded. A large florid man with English side-whiskers advanced with a military step up the beach.

"Major," fluttered Mrs. Vaux, "Romy tells me—"

"My love! one moment!" with a bland wave of the hand. "If you *would* say, 'My dear Major!' We are now among strangers, in the very eye of the public, as I might say. Our private life is liable to be commented on by reporters and correspondents at any moment. Why not make its beauty apparent, then?"

"Oh yes, certainly, dear Major. I was going to say—"

"Of your affection I have no doubt." The Major's trombone voice was in full wind now, and rolled in triumph up and down. "Why should it not, then, be manifest to others? 'Love is a creature of such heavenly birth'—you doubtless recall the remainder of the quotation. You were about to remark, my dear wife?"

Mrs. Vaux always spoke to her husband in a shrill frightened falsetto, which was timed now to high-pressure speed by his rebuke. She managed to jerk out the story of Romy's adventure in half a dozen incomplete sentences. "I was afraid the young man might presume on it to call," she ended lamely.

"I shall be heartily glad to see him. Heartily!" and from his puffy white hands and broad expanse of purple waistcoat to his bloated rolling voice, he was the very impersonation of oppressive hospitality. "Let us come in contact with the people. The very dregs of the people, if you choose, as in this case. You never have understood my principle, my love. I am glad that Romaine does, and is willing to join with her brothers and myself, at last. The more we come in contact with the people, the better for ourselves and our business. Socially, our position is impregnable. Vaux & Sons, who command the advertising patronage of one hundred daily

journals, can afford to meet any social Pariah. We hold the public by the ear, as it were, like an overgrown donkey, and lead it where we will. Our rank is higher than money, Frances. We are of the blood-royal of intellect."

"Yes, I'm sure I understand, Major."

The Major could not bear interruption in an oration. "I am very sure that you don't," testily. "I would embrace in charity, as it were, all human beings. There is no knowing which of them may need a newspaper. We can go out to meet this crab-fisher, for instance; not, of course, as an intelligent being, such as Judge Parker, who can push us as vehicles for government advertising, or any of our Congressional friends. But the inferior orders of God's creatures also were made to be of use. The sheep gives us wool, the cow beef, and this young man—"

"May give an advertisement," added his daughter.

"Precisely," turning his glaring topaz ring leisurely in the sun. "What's o'clock, Romaine?"

Now Mrs. Vaux knew by instinct that the aristocratic Major already rebelled against longer companionship in his thoughts with this fishy inferior, and made divers grimaces to warn Romy of the peril she was in. But the girl stumbled on for want of something to say.

"One peculiarity about him I did not tell you, mother; his name."

"I do not perceive, my daughter," he interrupted, "how the name of persons of this class can concern us. If they advertise—well. But their names or habits are matters into which I should no more be tempted to examine than those of the slugs or these very unpleasant beetles who torment us at night."

"But the name was peculiar," persisted Romy. "I never knew any family of the same, mother, but yours. You, at least, ought to be civil to the man."

Was it the cold sea mist, or fear of her husband, that gave the meek little woman's rouged face that sudden chilled look? Her voice, too, had lost its ordinary scared quaver, and sounded unnaturally quiet and controlled.

"What is his name?"

"Dort ; your own. Richard Dort."

"It is very improbable," blustered the Major, angrily. "Your stepmother's unusual name bears inherent evidence to the good blood and breeding of her family. If this fellow has it he has stolen it, that's all."

While the Major fumed and clucked about, his wife got up and went up the beach. He scowled after her through his eye-glasses. In town she dared not violate his rules by going off the two squares' aristocratic beat. But his face relaxed as he watched her fluttering figure zig-zagging over the sands. "Your mother is fond of solitary walks here in the country. They are hardly *en règle*. But the world may ascribe them to a love of Nature. And if it does not,—let her have her own way!" with a gulp. "Curse the world! Are we to be tied neck and heels by it?"

Late as it was when his daughter brought Dort that evening, Mrs. Vaux had not yet returned. The Major marched pompously up and down, watching the manufacture of some oyster *rissoles* in the fire by the black cook. He wore an amazing sea-side costume of his own devising, part sailor and part brigand, unprecedentedly embroidered and baggy. He rolled in his walk as though on quarter-deck.

The sight of him woke Dick with a shock out of a queer drowse into which he had fallen. The twilight, the lapping water, the soft steps pit-a-pat with his own, the contact, light as a breath, with the womanly form beside him, had touched him as so many magnetic fingers, bringing him like the clairvoyant into a new world of both facts and fancies.

A wife? Of course he must marry. And this—this was the first woman he had ever known. As for the fish-girls of the coast, he saw now how strong an infusion of the man and animal there was in them. Looking at Romy, with his dominant masculine eye, he counted her as won. Dick had domestic instincts, a big affectionate nature, and usually—his own way. He was shrewd enough to see that, in the gross, his education was better than the girl's. What obstacles could there be in the way? Why not marry her as soon as he had money enough?

Clearly, Dick knew the world no better

than any other young cub with its eyes not yet fully opened.

If he felt for a moment that there was nobody in the world than he, the man, and she, the woman, the portly apparition of Major Vaux promptly disabused him of the idea.

"My father, Mr. Dort, Major Vaux."

The Major's prompt effusive greeting was a novel experience to Richard. To a well-bred man it would have been overglossed and stagey; Dick, it bewildered and daunted. In a moment he found himself whisked into the tent, and before a *beaufet* covered with liquors. There was a glitter of silver presentation-cups with flattering inscriptions; there was exquisitely shaped glass; there were wines, crimson, amber, purple, of whose names even Dick had never heard.

"Dry or wet, Mr. Dort? Indifferent, eh? Adolph, a hock-glass! You see us in the rough, sir, in the rough! We find it good once in the year to loose ourselves from the trammels of state and fashion and throw ourselves upon the bosom of Mother Nature. Hence, our tent, our couch of skins, our barbaric cookery."

Dick held the gold-edged glass to his lips, his keen eyes glancing over it. If this was their barbaric life, what kind of world did these people have about them in town? It was as far removed from poor Dick as Al Raschid's palace, and the Major's urbanity drove that bitter truth home on him with every bow and grimace. Shrewd Dick felt too that they would not have dragged an equal in to drink at the first moment of acquaintance. It was to an animal or inferiors they would offer the hospitality of victuals instead of ideas.

A gentleman from another tent, a Mr. Langton, strolled over, and Dick had leisure to compare his own treatment with that of this stranger, who belonged to their own caste and culture. The Major probed Dick's specialties of knowledge, oyster-planting and the like; applied his pump, and speedily drained him dry. He got material enough in half an hour to work up into one magazine article and two leaders.

"When you are sufficiently prepared to bring your business formally into notice, I

will do what I can for you, young man," he said, summing up the matter and, in effect, dismissing him. "Vaux & Sons are the great advertising agents for the East. They command three hundred daily journals. We hold the public by the ear, Mr. Langton," with a puffy laugh, "as it were an overgrown donkey, and lead it where we will."

"And you ride the beast hard, Vaux?"

"Ah! now you do me too much credit! But I tell you," putting the topaz-ringed finger confidentially on the other man's breast—"I tell you—Romaine, my child, explain to Mr. Dort the machinery of Adolph's *cuisine*. You may find some useful hints there for your life in the swamps, sir. I was going to remark, Langton, as soon as we were rid of the young man, that there's no beast so profitable as the public, and no way of drawing the best juices from it like that of the newspaper. Make up your mind to put your capital in with ours, sir, and try it. What do I want?" falling into oratorical swing. "A house on the Hudson? A place in the Customs for my son? A coat? Jewelry for Madam Vaux? I apply my fingers to the beast, in the shape of a puff, and it gives me the best it has; forces it on me! Why, sir, my cellars are filled with wines such as Stewart could not buy. I have eight pictures of Mrs. Vaux in my drawing-room, by the best artists. I have her as a peasant, St. Cecilia, Andromeda, chained to the rock, and four other appropriate conceptions. I felt it my duty to Art to preserve her face before it faded." There was an odd touch of natural feeling in his tone, just here.

"You have no portrait of your daughter?" asked Langton, who had been one of that young lady's suitors.

"Of Romaine?" indifferently, "No. She is a good girl. Sound sense, sir, sound. But as to beauty, compared to Mrs. Vaux!—However, the child is well enough." It occurred to him suddenly that now was a good opportunity to give Langton his quietus. With all his money he was no match for Miss Vaux. "Yes, Romy is well enough. With my power in the press I can open circles to her where she will make a brilliant marriage. One match commanding political power is now in my eye. So

it goes, sir. The newspaper rules in trifles or matters of life and death. One hour it overthrows a dynasty, the next I go into the best French barber's in New York, and say 'I am Vaux of the press,' and he leaves me,"—with triumphant gesture over his dyed hair and moustache—"a work of art! And does not charge a penny!"

There was a pause in which Langton, a clever man of the world, managed to put his chagrin out of sight. "Where is Miss Vaux?"

"In her tent. She has shaken off the crab-man, I see," looking through his eye-glass at Dick, shirking off with his head down, across the sands.

"Romaine has certain democratic proclivities which make her the fittest member of the family to deal with that class. We leave them to her."

An hour or two later, Adolph's miracles of art were placed on the round table under the tent. One or two tiger-skins formed a carpet; Mrs. Vaux wore another costume yet more redolent than the last of the sea; the Major and his four sons were in strict sailor rig; the Major himself had fastened a white gull's wing in Romy's jetty hair. "We celebrate our repose upon the bosom of Mother Nature by such trifling rites as these," he told each of the three Congressmen who were bidden to dinner in turn as they arrived. The Major often made a successful point in his life-long game of euchre by picturesque dinners, aided by his inimitable wines. He described Dick, his capability and conceit, with a few keen touches. "One is astounded at the amount of power running to waste in the lower orders of men and animals," nodding philosophically. "You did not see the young man, my dear?"

Mrs. Vaux was brushing a moth away from her plate, and did not answer directly. "I met him on the sands," she said. "He did not know me."

The Major's face heated angrily. "If you had been here he would not have known *you*, my dear. The children and I may amuse ourselves with such persons, but they never are allowed to annoy you by contact." The children, Romy included, belonged to

the Major's early days of poverty and obscurity. But the meek scared little woman, the last of the Dorts, whom he had married late in life, was as a Grand Lama to him. She was the cap and crown of his social success ; she embodied all his claims on gentility and fashion. Besides, he had, in the mite of a heart hidden somewhere under the purple waistcoat and yellow seals and paunchy breast, a queer aching fondness for the woman, as a woman. He did his best now to show her off before Mr. Coles (then the Secretary of the Interior), who was their guest for the first time. When, at long intervals, she chirped out some small platitude, he looked round triumphantly, inwardly delighted, as though it were an epigram of the purest water. He noted her uneven breathing, and the deep daubs of rouge on her cheek-bones, and signified anxiously, by grimaces and nods to Romy, that one of her mother's headaches was coming on. When she fell into absolute silence he quoted her, supplying her with emotions, wit, and logic, *ad libitum*.

"Four fine boys, did you say, Mr. Coles?" with a sweep of his hand to the young men. "Not bad, sir, not bad! Mrs. Vaux overrates them, however. She must have them all about her in the home-nest. She gives them little significant names when we are alone. This cub, Newcastle (dramatic critic on the *Age*), is her Bayard ; John, to your right (local on the *Standard*), is her Philip Sidney ; George, who does the religious reporting for several of the New York papers, she calls Melancthon ; and Porter ——" The Major drained his glass, his invention suddenly collapsing. "Porter's sobriquet I have forgotten. He is my secretary in the advertising business. But it instances a mother's folly, Mr. Coles. We know the weaknesses of a mother's heart."

"Not a mother in reality?" said Mr. Coles, politely. "I need but look in Mrs. Vaux's youthful face to know these stalwart fellows are only yours by adoption, madam."

"Only by adoption," she said, smiling faintly.

"You have none of your own?"

Mrs. Vaux was raising a glass of wine to her mouth as he spoke. She held it there a moment untasted, and set it down again.

"No. I have no child," she said.

Mr. Coles was in the middle of one of his best anecdotes a minute later (and all the world knows what a famous story-teller he was) when the Major cried out shrilly, "What is it, Frances? Romaine, your mother!"

But Romy had her arm about her mother before he spoke to her. "No, she is not dying"—to the frightened men. "Her head troubles her at times. We will take her outside."

They carried the meagre figure out, and laid her on the sands. The brilliant wax-lights within the door of the tent flamed down on the frosted silver and red wine, and the gay tiger-robos. Outside a horned spectral moon hung low over the waste of black water, and the stretch of gray beach disappearing in the night on either side. Far off in the marshes, where the night was, a man walked, watching as he went the red beam of light streaming out from the tent, and the ghost-like figures moving about it. His feet sunk deep in the mud ; an army of moths and grasshoppers rose from the sedge before him, the gnats stung him furiously. These people belonged to a world of ease and refinement and culture, of whose existence he had never even heard until to-night. The gulf between him and them was broad as that which lay between Dives and Lazarus. He saw that clearly now.

CHAPTER II.

MR. LANGTON kept an observant eye on Miss Vaux's comings-in and goings-out. He soon discovered that the young crab-fisher was oddly associated with them. If she was belated in her solitary explorations among the cranberry bogs, Dort was sure to discover her and bring her home ; if she ventured too far out in her boat, it was Dort's seines she ran into, and he paddled her to shore out of self-defence ; when she came back from the hills, it was Dort who followed behind, a beast of burden loaded with lichen or moss.

Langton, being one of those men who dribble out every fear or fancy to the first passer-by, ran with the matter to Coles. "There's an attachment there," he cried, "take my word for it. There's an attachment. The

romance of the thing—solitary mills—sea. These chance meetings have bewildered her.”

“Nonsense! Why, I know that young lady, Langton; she is a lady. There is not a drop of her blood that belongs to the Vaux breed. She is delicate and refined beyond most women. And this fellow is a vulgar crab-man, I think you told me? Red shirt—bare legs—toes for clams, eh?”

“N-no.” Langton hesitated thoughtfully. “He has a certain amount of culture; a heterogeneous mass of book-learning, with utter ignorance of society. I can understand the attraction the fellow has for her. There is a genial, downright straightforwardness in his manner that had an odd charm in it even to me, and Romaine Vaux has lived on sham and varnish until one would think her soul loathed it.”

Coles laughed. “That’s true. The Major is certainly the cursedest —, but sharp as a steel trap under all his weakness. He would have smelled the rat in the arras in this affair, if there were any there. He keeps a keen watch on Romaine. She is his right bower. He means to play her some day, and win.”

“I know it. But that very idea blinds him. He talks of Dort as a sort of hiring whom Miss Vaux employs. ‘I hope you remunerate the man for rowing you about,’ he said to-day. ‘Bring him up and I’ll give him a bottle or so of ale, if you don’t care to spare money. These water-rats ’long-shore drink like fish,’ he added, turning to me. No. He sees nothing.”

“There’s nothing to see. It’s all your jealousy, Langton. Miss Vaux is a pure, sweet girl—a good deal too clear-sighted to throw herself into the gutter in that fashion.”

Mr. Coles strolled away, and Langton turned toward the Vaux tent. “Sweet?” Oh! there was no doubt of her amiability, poor Langton thought bitterly. It hid her, and kept unwelcome intruders off from her as effectually as would plate armor. But what the deuce was she thinking of under the sweetness? “There she is,” he muttered, “just the same, with her pleasant laugh and gentle, soft glances, whether she refuses to marry me, or sits listening to the Major toadying one man and

bragging to the next. By George! what gall and wormwood that must be for the girl to drink! I don’t wonder she is ready to fling herself to the first honest crab-fisher that comes along, to be rid of it.”

He was resolved to move in the matter at once—but how? A word to old Vaux would be effectual, but Langton was loath to put the girl in her father’s power; he had a fancy that with all the Major’s purring softness he had tigerish claws. “He has no affection for anything under God’s heaven but his wife,” he thought. Mrs. Vaux? Hillo! There was a chance! Langton quickened his steps to the tent. The woman has common sense, he thought; he could appeal to her without risk.

Mrs. Vaux was sitting on a pile of the tiger-skins at the door of the tent when he came up; netting, as usual, with breathless eagerness at some gaudy enormity of zephyr and beads. She manufactured such quantities of these pouches and caps, that the steel needles seemed to have grown a part of her fingers. The money she made (for they were sold secretly) the Major deposited in bank for her, and refused to touch, no matter how close to starvation they were pushed sometimes. “It is your mother’s little secret,” he would say gently to the Vaux boys. “Let her keep it. Some deed of holy charity, doubtless.”

She looked up smiling when Langton approached. When the Major was out of sight, the scared little woman had a certain timid dignity of her own, very winning and pleasant.

He took a seat on the skins at her feet. “I came to speak to you in reference to Miss Vaux, madam.”

Mrs. Vaux bowed and straightened her thoughts and her thread, with a sly amused glance at the young man. If Romy’s lovers came for information from her, they would find she could fence and parry and guard the child’s secrets as well as any man of them all. It was like the ghost of one of her own old love-affairs coming back. Her thin cheek grew red and her blue eye sparkled.

“You know this young man, Dort, doubtless, Mrs. Vaux?”

Mrs. Vaux turned sharply and looked at him.

"Dort? You came to talk to me of him?"

"And of your daughter. The subjects are the same, unfortunately. Can you give me your attention for a moment?"

"Dort, you said? I have never seen him. I have been in the tent and heard his voice. But I have never looked at him. Never."

"You feared Major Vaux would dislike it, probably?" Gently, for the inexplicable agitation of the poor lady touched him. Was Vaux such a tyrant, that the mere thought of his annoyance could so shake the woman? She had recovered herself, measurably, however, before she answered him.

"I have no fear of displeasing my husband. I have never wronged him knowingly—not in the least trifle," with a steady countenance, but for a queer quaver in her chin. "Of what did you say you came to talk to me, Mr. Langton?"

"I won't detain you long. It is a matter in which I fear you will think I have no concern." He drew closer to her, and lowered his voice.

CHAPTER III.

MR. LANGTON had ended his conference. Mrs. Vaux sat for a while on the tiger-skins, fingering the heaps of purple worsted and steel beads in her lap. The gaudy things had filled a miserable, pathetic part in her life. She was thinking about them rather than the story he told her. Since she was a pink-faced, coquettish little chit, it had been Fanny Dort's habit to seize on the trifles of life, and keep as far as she could out of the great currents of love or passion and right or wrong. She got up and went down the beach in search of Romaine, trying to think of the turtles and frogs down in the sedge, or the blue dragon-flies flashing in the evening light over the black gullies she crossed. But in spite of herself she went back to that day—that one day which had put meaning and strength into her shallow life when she was a girl; when from noon till dark her baby, her own baby, lay on her bosom. A single short half-day! They took him away the next. But she fan-

cied the fat little hand was fumbling now about her neck, and could feel the milk throb again in her withered breasts, on which a child had never lain since then. She went over it all. How when they told her the boy was dead, as well as its father, she had gone, flirting and giddy, into the world she lived in now—fastened herself in. It was a world made up of the Major, and cheap finery, and a footsore tagging after fashionable people, and puffery, and perpetual brag. She, too, had learned to brag in her piping way; and to gape at and imitate the habits of her betters, as the Major called their richer neighbors. When the time came that she found her child still lived, she had nothing left her to do but to sit and chafe year after year at the intangible meshes which she had woven, that kept her from him, inflexible as chains of steel, and to net and crochet hideous finery to make money to send him. In the midst of her tawdry fashion and eternal pleasure-going, the soul of the weak little body dwelt alone and kept silence, as in darkness and the shadow of death. Other women held their children close to their lives—dirty greenbacks were all that were left her with which to touch or reach hers. She stretched out her hands now over the wide beach with a cry. She had come there, not hoping she would have courage to claim him, but thinking she might look at him once, perhaps find his steps in the sand, and put her own feet in them. "I must call those great Vaux men my sons," she cried feebly, "give them pet names; and when my own boy stands without the tent, I dare not look at him!"

She saw Romaine coming, and tried to be cool, and reason with herself what was best to be done. If Langton's story was true, and Major Vaux should discover the hold Dort had upon his daughter, the whole truth must come out.

"He must be told that he is my son!" Mrs. Vaux stopped short. "My son!" Her shrivelled heart swelled for the moment to the measure of a true woman's. Romy was very dear to her: all that was bright and real in her life had belonged to the girl. "My son and Romy, man and wife?" After all, there were such things as love and sincer-

ity, and actual happiness ! She had missed them ; but here they were !

But the Major ? How would she come to him with her shame ? And the Vaux boys ? And their set on Fifteenth street ? How could the Major tell them that his wife was a mother instead of a maid when he married her ? " They would cut him at once ! And he's been so long getting into society ! They might overlook it, though," pausing hopefully. " There was that story of the Kart-rights was worse. But Richard is only a crab-fisher ! and Mr. Langton has seen him bare-legged ! " She stopped again, pulling desperately at a wisp of false hair until it came out. Romy, coming up, laughed at her mother while she kissed her, and began to set her to rights. But the little woman was worn-out with the life-long battle going on within her between love and sham : or, if you choose, God and the devil.

The tears stood in her eyes. " It's that braid I got at Bury's. He charged me fifty dollars, and it's nothing but combings. But it's not the hair ! " she sobbed. " It's all alike ! I and all the rest of it—false and a cheat ! "

Romy put her strong arm about her mother, and walked gravely beside her until she stopped sobbing.

" Now, come on ! " she said. The girl had a sudden idea. Her tanned cheek reddened and her eyes blazed. They turned their backs on the uneasy tide and entered a pine forest. Their feet sank noiseless and deep in the brown needles ; the soft sunset light shone tranquilly through the aisles of gray trunks ; a spider swung drowsily across the path, the web gleaming like a red hair ; there were low bay bushes here and there, whose leaves, crushed under their feet, filled the air with a pungent, reviving scent ; dusty-winged moths flew lazily through the arching, dusky green roof overhead.

" It is as still and solemn as a church," cried Mrs. Vaux. They came out of the forest presently into an apple orchard, in the middle of which stood a large house built of logs, as gray and feathery with lichen as the living trees. There was no living thing in

sight, but two or three cows staring gravely out of their enclosure. The sunshine here was broad and unimpeded ; so full of life, that a wisp of dull smoke from the chimney turned into a brilliant crimson cloud in it, and drifted over the sky ; the old trees in the orchard had that curious friendly welcoming air which trees that generations of children have climbed always have ; now and then an over-ripe apple dropped with a thud upon the grass ; the house-door stood wide open, and inside a wood fire burned on a broad hearth. Romy led her mother in.

" It is an old fisherman who lives here with his son. I come to see him sometimes, when the son is away. He is a good friend of mine."

" But the door is open."

" They never shut it, I believe, day or night," laughed Romy. She pulled a chair near the fire and placed her mother in it, so that she could look out of doors and yet be warmed.

" But it's a very peculiar habit not to shut a door," dribbled Mrs. Vaux. " It must be a great relief to have the idea of burglars and pickpockets struck out of the world. I spend so much time thinking of them."

Her clothes, which were damp, were drying already ; a pleasant drowsy warmth relaxed her lean body ; the fire leaped and crackled, and fell in soft gray ashes ; outside the sun shone. A row of purple hollyhocks edged the fence ; some chickens came pecking at the fallen red apples ; a sparrow hopped among them unmolested. The room was large, the walls stained a clear gray ; it was kept in that certain order dear to an old maid or a skilled mechanic. There were crab-nets and lobster-pots and guns at one end, a dresser with dishes at the other, and a great book-case full of books. Mrs. Vaux could read their titles from where she sat. " He must be a scholarly fisherman," she said.

They sat quiet for a long time. Purposely, Romy did not break the cheerful silence. Mrs. Vaux's feeble inconsequent brain received impressions as readily as a shallow pool of water, which has no color of its own. Besides, she had been tired for many years ; this was a different rest from any she had ever known.

"This is a different life from ours. One is quite shut off from the world here," she said. "I suppose now, a woman who lived here would never know in all her life if skirts were worn *bouffante* or plain, and the men would never need to advertise or take a newspaper. Dear, dear!" — with a sigh of relief, "The furniture is dreadfully out of date, Romy, but it's very comfortable."

"It's all paid for," said Romy, dryly; and then, angry at her own acrid tone, she hurried on, talking to fill the silence. "There's a great deal of hard work done here. But they live out of the woods and rivers, you understand. That is the way the great quiet comes. It's a curious sensation to take food which costs nothing, right from Nature's hand."

"It must be, indeed; no butchers' bills. Small tradesmen are so exacting; and no advertising, as I said. But your old fisherman is dreadfully rough, I suppose. Very unlike your father."

"He is very unlike my father."

A quick, decisive step was heard crunching the dry grass outside. "Here he is," said Romy. "But no!" rising hastily with a blush of annoyance and pleasure, "it is his son. I thought he was out of the way to-day."

The man came up whistling. There was a moment's pause, in which Mrs. Vaux gave a rapid glance about the room, at the nets in the corner, and the books; then a terrified gleam of comprehension came into her face. She got up, steadying herself by the mantelshelf as he came nearer, calling to a dog that followed him. When she first heard his voice she turned, looking wildly from side to side for some chance to escape, and then she suddenly stood still.

The boy she had lost twenty-five years ago was coming back to her. She held out her trembling hands.

"What is the matter, mother?" said Romy quietly. "It is only Richard Dort."

(To be continued.)

NATASQUA.

(Continued from page 69.)

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. VAUX nodded. She meant to tell him now that he was her son. Whatever strength or another's love there was in her, lifted her unreliable nature at that moment into unnatural heights of courage. But the moment was as terrible to her as though her shallow, fidgety soul had been unexpectedly called to judgment before God.

"At any rate, I want to be alone," she said irritably, pulling on and off her glove. "Go out, Romy, go out: I have something to say to—to this gentleman."

Romy went out, blushing. She thought of course she knew what her mother wanted to talk about. There was only one secret in the world for her at that time.

There was only one for Dick. It put blood and life into everything else. As he came up the path, he was thinking what a confoundingly raw uncomfortable day it was, and how a bushel or two of mussel-shells would help that potato patch; but when he saw the gray-cloaked figure in the porch, the air between him and it grew full of autumnal, golden lights; he saw the green arch of trailing vines over her crusted with purplish drops of grapes; the roses along the path opened wide, blood-red, and pungent.

"You here! I never found you here before. You—" He had reached her with a bound and touched her hand. He always took

her hand for an instant when they first met. The touch of it, white, warm, yielding, lingered on the man's rough paw until it came again, though that were for days.

"I came to see your father. I thought you were at the village."

"No matter. You are here."

She turned to look at the sky, the grapes, the pine-knots in the floor. Dick's eyes breathlessly followed hers—trembling, fugitive, conscious. No doubt when this man and woman were babies of five years old they behaved with more reason and dignity; but oh, how red were those roses, how the grapes glimmered and shone, how God poured life into the cold wind that afternoon!

"I forgot," she said at last with a start, "my mother is in the house. She wishes to see you. I will walk down to the orchard until your talk with her is over."

Dick helped her over the stile and stood to watch her furtively as she walked away. "If she cared for me she would give one look back," he thought. He had fallen into this habit of spying upon the girl when unsuspected. He watched at the door of her heart perpetually with a fierce hunger like a beast of prey to seize on the secret of her love if it should creep out. He would have stolen it: there were times when he would have liked to wrench it from her by force; he could de

anything but say to her manfully "I love you," and so put his own fate to the final test. Dort, who was naturally manly and straightforward, was neither manly nor straightforward in his love. The life-long swagger had been completely cowed out of him the other day by a swagger that was bigger and falser than his own. The Major's glitter and brag had paralyzed him, as with the spell of the evil eye. Fashion, after all, is your malign enchanter; nothing lames or palsies a fresh young nature like it.

"I'm glad," thought Romy, "he is going to meet mother." He would see that they were not all of them sham and varnish: the silly, affectionate little woman would give him courage, no doubt. She might even some day be a mediator between Dort and her father. Romy was sanguine, as you see.

"I'm glad," thought Dort, knocking the mud off his shoes on the steps, "I am to meet her mother." If she were the gentle, lovable creature that Romy had described, he could insure himself a chance through her. Between his love and the savage snubbings he had lately received, Dick's heart had never found its way so near to the surface; he had never been so humbled, or so hungry for cordial sympathy or comfort. If Mrs. Vaux had owned herself his mother at that moment, it is probable he would have eagerly accepted her as the one thing which his life needed. But to-morrow was always Mrs. Vaux's accepted time of salvation.

Hearing his steps crunching the sand, she came toward the door to meet him. But just then her eye fell on a square looking-glass on the wall, and she caught sight of her gaudy yellow and purple dress, fluffy hair, and the paste jewelry dangling from neck and ears. She drew back as if she had had a blow.

"Why! what will he think of me? I look like a soubrette at the Bowery," she said aloud. "No, I'll not claim my son until I am decently dressed." She stood in the middle of the room adjusting her collar, a cold sweat on her face, and a sudden, awful void in her heart.

Dort stepped up into the doorway. He was broad and loosely built; his eyes gray, keen, and good-tempered, like his father's. A bold, downright air, too, like his father's. His

father? Oh God! Now, now she knew how she had loved that stupid, good-natured John Walt, who lived and died long ago in a country doctor's office. A country doctor, but he seemed like a very god to her, now, in the remembering.

Dort crossed the room, smiling, his hand out. "This is—I believe—"

"Your—your—" Her eye fell on the purple skirt. "I am Miss Vaux's mother."

It was not the first time that a tag of ribbon or daub of rouge has come between a soul and its salvation.

"I'm very glad to see Miss Vaux's mother under this roof," said Dick, bustling about to find her a seat. What odd pleading eyes she had! There was certainly none of her husband's pomp or circumstance about this little lady.

"You are glad to see *me*?"

She sat down looking white and scared. Evidently, she knew less of the usages of society than Dick himself. As he was convinced of that he grew quite bold and confident thereupon.

"Yes, madam. Especially glad to welcome you. Miss Vaux has told me so much of —"

"Oh! it is for Miss Vaux's sake —?"

"Why—yes," with a surprised laugh. "You see I never had the pleasure of knowing you before."

"No. You never knew me," with whitening lips, patting down her ruffles. Dick looked down at her, puzzled, trying to find out the key to her agitation. Her ordinary habit of society helped her quickly to outward composure.

"You have a sweet, quiet place here, Mr. Dort," she said presently.

"Yes; it's certainly quiet," looking about with a half-grimace. "It's a poor place enough, God knows. You and Miss Vaux must see that, though you're so polite as to appear to like it. There's such a lack of all that you're both used to—elegance and style. No hopes of them!"

Poor Mrs. Vaux, who was watching every turn in her son's face, laughed. "Do they count for so much to you?" with a queer pathos in her voice.

It moved Dick, who was feverish and excited at any rate, to sudden confidence. "'Pon my soul, ma'am, I believe they count for everything!" throwing himself down beside her. "Why, they stand between me and all that is worth having in the world! Two months ago I would have been satisfied to see a clear way before me to earn a respectable living, and to have, of course, a little time to spare every day for a book or a newspaper. Now—well, now I see that there is one thing more which I must have, or I give up life at once; and I can never obtain it without rank, and position, and style. How the devil am I to have position and style?" with a sudden, despairing gesture, as though he tried to clutch an intangible something in the air. He recovered himself presently with an awkward laugh. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Vaux; I'm sure I don't know why I should talk to you in this way!"

"I know." She put out her hand timidly and touched his hair. There was a certain proud sense of possession in the touch. This was *her* son. There was, too, the mother's love that had been famishing within her all her life, and never till this moment found chance of utterance. "What is it that you want? Can I help you? If I could help you, Mr. Dort, it—it would matter more to me than you know."

Dick drew back a little, on his guard. "You're—you're very kind, I am sure. I thought, perhaps, you would prove our friend. She has told you, perhaps?" looking at her searchingly.

"Romy? No. But I knew. I guessed. Oh! when I was a girl, I knew what true love was," fluttering her skirts with a pathetic little cackle. "I had begun to think there was no such thing left in the world until you and Romy——."

"I do not know that Miss Vaux cares for me. I never have spoken to her as I am doing to you."

"Cares for you? Oh, there can be no doubt as to that," drawing herself up angrily. The idea of Major Vaux's daughter rejecting her son!

"Do you think that? Thank God!" Dort took out his handkerchief and wiped his face.

"I'm quite sure of it."

"You'll think me a fool, no doubt," he said after a while, "to care for any woman so much;" thoughtfully crumpling his handkerchief into a ball. Once sure of Romy's love, the old, comfortable complacency began to warm in his veins. "It was always my theory, Mrs. Vaux, that love and marriage were comparatively trivial matters, which a man should hold in his hands, as one might say, apart from his real business in life, to keep or throw from him—"(and he threw the ball into his hat at his feet with a certain decisive, victorious air)—"at pleasure. At pleasure. But since I met Miss Vaux, I really am so metamorphosed that I hardly know myself." He looked at her, and laughed like a boy. It was a very frank, bright face. "My theory seems to have failed me."

"I understand." For it seemed to her that she was Fanny Dort again, in white muslin and pink sash, and John beside her. Here were his eyes and smile—this was the very same rough, cordial voice. She had been a woman with that old lover; she had known love like other women; for the rest of her life she had been a doll, a milliner's block.

"I understand it very well," said the poor lady, with the tears coming to her eyes.

"I have nothing, you see, to offer Miss Vaux," continued Dort, gravely, "but a home like this. I'll tell the truth about it from the first. I don't want to deceive you. You see what I am. You see the house. This is the best I may have for years. I'll do what I can to push my business. But I know nothing, and can do nothing, outside of Natasqua. I can never give her the fashion and luxury which she has now. What do you say?"

He watched her anxiously. She looked at the room, with its white board floor, the fire burning up from the gray ashes; then out at the apple orchard, with the friendly trees on the hill slope, so still that you could hear the crickets hopping through the seed grass; and down to the broad river, tranquilly flowing below, while the evening sky stained it a dull red. They thought their own thoughts out quietly—trees, and skies, and river.

A sudden conviction came to her that this was home. Here love, and truth, and God

waited. In the house at Fifteenth street there were, she thought, neither love nor God. Why should the girl not come here? Why? When she knew this boy's father she too had had a chance of truth and rest, and had put it away. "It would have been salvation for me," she thought; "yes, salvation."

"What is it?" said Dort, uneasily, seeing her wipe away the tears. Mrs. Vaux's tears always were ready to flow. "Did I vex you in any way?"

"Oh dear, no. I was only thinking. Just a little matter that happened to me long ago, in which you were not concerned, except—that is—well, relatively."

"You would be willing, then, for your daughter to come to me here!"

"Yes." She gave a queer laugh, and then was silent. He might as well, she thought, have asked her if she would be willing for Romy to go in and sit down with the blest in heaven. Was not he here? her son? Romy could sit down with him here forever, in love and quiet; secure. *She* must go back outside into the sham, and eternal pushing and lying. But all she said was: "It will be very pleasant for Romy. Perhaps you will let me come for a little while now and then?"

"You think there will be no difficulty, then, about Major Vaux's consent?" Dick was intent on driving home his wedge.

"Major Vaux?" With the word a change came over her from head to foot. She woke, as it were, completely. "The Major? But you know it would be impossible for you to marry Major Vaux's daughter. Really, to marry—you know. I know," breathlessly, "it's like a church here, and makes one feel religious, and all that; and you would have true love—and I know what that is," stopping to sob. "But then, actually—you see, actually—looking at it rationally—. There are no carpets, and not even shades to the windows; and, well, this is really a kitchen, to speak plainly, and if you even had the money to build an addition, you could only have one parlor—and what could Romy, raised as she has been, do with one parlor? Why, Mr. Langton has a house in town, and a place on Staten Island. Oh, very stylish! And yet the Major

—Oh, if you talk of marrying, it's impossible—impossible!"

Dort's face darkened sullenly. "I have a mind, however, to go to him to-night, and tell him plainly what I want, and who I am."

"Who you are? Yes; if you were to marry Romy, it must be told who you are." She added, slowly, in a low voice, "I had forgotten that."

"He can learn it from any man in the county," blurted out Dick, boldly. "There is but one thing that can be said against me. I am a man whose only disgrace was his mother. Am I responsible for her shame?"

"No, no," moaned the poor little woman. But Dort did not hear her. His heat and chagrin made him deaf; he walked to the door, and stood there sulkily, giving a kick to the dog who came to rub against his leg.

Mrs. Vaux sat pressing her thin palms together. "*Shame?* but he's my son; my son," she repeated again and again. "If I can give Romy to him he'd forgive me. He'd never say *that* to me again; never."

She tried to speak once or twice but still sat dumb. "Her shame?"

Like most weak, shallow women, Fanny Vaux had always been gently handled; even the Major's gross touch had grown tender for her. Now—it was her son who had flung the vile insult in her face. No wonder that she gasped, unable to find words to answer him. She half rose:

"I'll tell him the truth. I'll throw myself at his feet and let him kill me, if he wants to." But her courage gave way in two steps. "If I could secure Romy for him, he would forgive me anything."

As girl or woman, Fanny Vaux was noted for her petty, amiable cunning. Her plan came to her like an inspiration. She went up and touched him on the elbow: "Listen to me. I'll do all I can to secure Romy for you. But it is useless to try to conquer her father. If we leave the beach and go back to town she is as completely out of your reach as if she were, well, inside the wall of China, and you know what that is. Your love seems reasonable enough here. But there——!" she had a sudden vision of Dort in his brown velveteen Sunday suit, and jaunty cap stuck on one

side, presenting himself at her Thursday receptions. "If she goes back, she is lost to you."

"I do not intend to lose her," steadily. "I mean to marry her. I will tell her father so. I'll wait for her as long as Jacob did for Rachel. Position and style? They're not impossible things."

"Oh, but they are—they are, I assure you!" hastily. "I know the world; trust to me. We go back in three days, and Romaine Vaux is then utterly out of your power."

"What do you want me to do, then?"

"Marry her to-morrow. Let the marriage remain a secret until you are ready to claim her. Major Vaux has no power over man and wife."

Dick stood stunned a moment, and then laughed. "You are a bold ally, Mrs. Vaux. But your plan seems a trifle cowardly to me. I hate underhanded work, especially in anything so—so sacred as marriage. I will, at least, go to him first, and if he refuses—why then——"

"Go to Romy, now. She is down by the river. She knows her father. She will show you how practicable your scheme is."

"It may not be practicable, but it is honest."

"Go to Romy," shaking her head with mild mulishness.

There was a heavy leisurely step on the porch, and old Inskip came in. Natasqua people are never surprised. He took off his old cap and held it in both hands, smiling as though this astounding, beruffled, fidgety apparition was a daily visitor.

"This is Miss Vaux's mother, father."

Inskip held out his hand. "That young lady and I count on each other as friends," he said. "She comes here often."

He sat down and began to pull the leather-colored breeches down over his knees; but they, having no sense of gentility, resented this departure from their normal condition, and hung in rolls, like weather-beaten sails bulged by the wind.

"The skin of his legs is burned quite a mud-color," reflected Mrs. Vaux, gravely. She immediately felt the duty of thoughtfully deciding upon the character of the man who had

trained her boy. "My fingers smell of clams since he shook hands, and as for his nails, I really don't think he trims them once a month."

But there was something in his face which made her stop short. She did not attempt to sound or define it. The tears came to her eyes. "Very likely he was a better father to my son than his own would have been."

She stole a furtive keen glance towards him now and again. But she was met each time by a glance which, though grave and kind, was shrewder than her own. She got up and walked uneasily across the room. "What does he know?" she thought. "What can he know?"

CHAPTER V.

DORT had a habit of striking the nail on the head without the least concern as to where the point went. "Father," he said, bluntly, "you remember the conversation we had yesterday, when I told you of my wishes in regard to Miss Vaux?"

The old man started, looked at Mrs. Vaux, and then at the fire, like an embarrassed boy.

"I remember, Richard," he said, deliberately, at last. But he was ill at ease. He had never had a love affair of his own, and for weeks he had been turning over this trouble of Dick's in his mind with a tender, delicious fear and delight. And now the boy was hauling it out in the market-place, so to speak, to air and examine it.

"Oh, yes," clearing his throat, "I remember."

"Mrs. Vaux has suggested a course for me. She will talk it over with you until I come back. I have not made up my mind yet about it."

"I wonder if Dick really thinks it is oysters he is going to buy?" thought Inskip, with a quick look of alarm at Mrs. Vaux. But she saw no cause for offence. Her eyes were fixed on Dick, who threw on his cap, took a stealthy glance at the handsome, confident face under it in the mirror, and went out.

The old man followed him, trotting by his side until they were out of hearing. He stopped under an apple-tree. "Richard!"

catching him by the sleeve, and pausing as if for breath.

"What is it? You look horribly cut up, father. You're not worrying about this matter of Romy's? It will all come right. You shouldn't take my troubles so hard, dear old boy," clapping him on the shoulder.

"Did she tell you who she was?" under his breath.

"Who? Mrs. Vaux? Why, of course. That is, she only told me she was Romy's mother; but I can see for myself that she is a woman of high fashion. Good-hearted, too, and with any amount of hard common sense. There are not many women whom I cannot read. My eyes are wide open."

"Oh yes, wide open," abstractedly. "I'd have thought you could soon read this poor woman." He looked at Dick steadily a minute, as if deciding on some puzzle to himself, and then deliberately, as usual, took his hand from his sleeve. "Go on, Dick. I'll keep her till you come back."

But Inskip did not return directly to the house. He made a pretext to himself of going into the garden for parsley and sweet basil. He had not the courage to meet the woman again.

"Why, the mother's look in her eyes would have touched a stone, and Dick never saw it," sorting his sprigs of herbs in even lengths. He thought he quite understood how it was with her. How these twenty years of remorse and guilt lay on her. How, at the sight of him, she would try to read her boy's soul to see if he was likely to have a clearer and purer record than hers had been. And when she had found the same temptation put in his way before which she had fallen, to love outside of his station, the poor creature had devised some plan to save him from both her disappointment and her crime.

"She hadn't courage to make herself known to him, and no wonder! She's just waiting, I reckon, till he's gone to speak to me. I'd best hurry in." But he made haste slowly. Pain or supreme passion were strangers to Natasqua, and of all men Inskip was the most cowardly to go and meet them.

"I'll be back with the pail, Bess, presently," patting the brown cow that thrust her head

out to be stroked. The chickens were flapping and cackling their way up into the dusky apple-trees to roost. The katydids began to drone on the bark. A fish hawk came with great circular sweeps out of the red horizon to perch for the night on its dead tree in the middle of the meadow. "Now I reckon that poor creature would rather tell her story by daylight than night," and this thought drove him in quickly. The poor creature was sitting, languidly poising one of her daintily booted feet before the fire. She was wondering, if Romy ever did come there to live, how about her shoes? Country cobblers were no better than blacksmiths, and Romy's feet were really so perfect! But she would never come. That chance of happiness was over for her boy.

"It is I who have done it. Ten years ago, if I had claimed him, he might have been something better than a crab-fisher. I have been his curse."

Inskip saw her staring gloomily into the fire. He drew out the table, put a cloth over it, and began to make the tea. Anything to give her time and composure. The fragrant steam came out from the pot on the hearth in a soft, white whiff. Some soft crabs began to sputter with a savory smell in a pan on the fire. Inskip brought out a great loaf of home-made bread from the cupboard. Mrs. Vaux was both hungry and tired of emotion; besides, she had been a country girl in her youth, and this supper was a different affair and more appetizing than Adolph's efforts of high art.

"O dear, I would like to cut that bread!" jumping up. "It is so nice in you to have tea while we are here. There! See how even these slices are. Oh, I used to be a famous bread-cutter; but that is such a long time ago. Where in the world did you pick up this old blue basket-ware china? Why, it's as precious now-a-days as molten gold. Off a wreck? Actually a wreck? Oh, I wish Romy would make haste! The idea of drinking tea out of a shipwrecked cup!"

The delight seemed to bewilder her; she sat down and kept silence for two minutes. Then she plunged into the very bottom of the matter which troubled her. "The way I look at it is this, Mr. Inskip:" (confidentially),

"Romy might not have a parlor or shoes. But really you don't know how pleasant this room is; a great deal larger than the poky little sitting-room in Fifteenth Street, for of course we never use the reception rooms ourselves. It's really lovely here with the orchard and all. And if you've no carpets you've no moths; as the Major says, there are always compensations; and if Romy had a stout person to come in and do the rough work, I really don't think cutting bread and making tea and so on is so objectionable; even the cooking crabs appears to be almost a joke; and these wrecked plates and things, why there's not a woman in our set who would not give her eyes for them. Shoes might be sent by express, and now there is the whole matter in a nutshell. Outside of these differences, why it's all the same at bottom. Romy crochets or reads in Fifteenth Street; she would read and crochet in Natasqua. I protest, when you look at it philosophically that way, the thing seems perfectly feasible to me."

"I am glad you think so." Inskip, fork in hand, looked bewildered alternately from her to his crabs, understanding the nature of one about as much as the other. "I was afraid there might be some difficulty in the boy's way. He spoke of Miss Vaux's father."

"Oh, the Major?" with a momentary collapse all over; but she rose elastic. "That difficulty can be managed—that is, if it is managed cleverly. A little judicious manœuvring is all that is needed. I want them to leave it to me," with a sagacious nod.

"Kin I ask you how you purpose to manage it, ma'am?" he hesitated, after a long silence—"The boy's bin like a son to me, you know."

Her cheek-bones grew red. "He *is* my son—that is, he will be when he is Romy's husband, of course. It would be quite impossible for *you* or anybody to understand the interest I take in Richard Dort," with a complacent, boastful little laugh, so like to Dick's own that Inskip started.

"She has his nose, too, and his kerridge precisely; head a bit on one side. But it's hard to think she's the woman I've bin lookin' for all these years," he thought, with many furtive glances at the shallow, excited face op-

posite. Poor Fanny appeared in her most unmotherly phase. A manœuvre or a petty secret always intoxicated her like a draught of heady wine. The consciousness that she had a son living, so long as she was forced to keep it locked in her own breast, had been a dead unaltering weight, dragging her down night and day like a hand from the grave. But this meeting him and Inskip, herself unknown; this fence and parry to escape detection; this plotting and counter-plotting on Romy's behalf—why, it was a play! She was the heroine of a melo-drama! They were all puppets, and she pulled the string.

"You may be sure, Mr. Inskip," she chattered on excitedly, "I'll do the best that can be done for the young people. I think I can say without flattering myself, I have always had some skill in managing love affairs. They need the sensibility of youth, with the judgment of an older head. Now in this case I propose a secret marriage, to be kept secret until Richard is able to support his wife. That settles all difficulties. Richard is satisfied; the Major can't be dissatisfied (as he'll know nothing about it); and I—it would be better for me; too," her voice growing suddenly feeble. "For if Richard goes to Major Vaux for his daughter, I must go with him and claim him as my son," she repeated to herself again and again. That was the ground on which she built her whole comprehension of the matter.

Inskip stuck the fork into the table, and stood with his hands folded behind him, looking into the fire.

"You don't seem to approve of my plan?" testily.

"No," turning his grave, stern eyes on her's, "I kin see no use in Richard's acting a lie for years."

"It is to gain a wife he loves. It seems to me it must be salvation to a man to marry for love. Or for a woman. This is the only chance for him."

"I kin see no use in a man acting a lie for years. Least of all, on account of his salvation," repeated the old man, doggedly.

Mrs. Vaux gave an impatient little flirt in her chair. "Obstinate old mule!" she said inwardly. "Perhaps, my dear sir," aloud

and energetically, "you think there would be danger of detection. But that's because you don't know the world. Success in such a thing all depends on knowing the world. A little skill and management. Why, I knew of such a secret being kept—a child was born and its existence was unknown for twenty years; just think—twenty years! No shadow of suspicion fell on the mother in all that time. Oh, I assure you, Mr. Inskip, nothing's easier if you only know the way to do it."

"Is it a good way? Kin *you* recommend it to my boy?" He turned his head away, afraid to see her face if he hurt her, but went on steadily. "'Ud that mother now, d' ye think, recommend to her boy to follow her in her shame? Has it been so good for her?"

Mrs. Vaux rose passionately, but before she found words the passion was gone. The life-long dead pain tugged at her with its old intolerable weight. She got up trembling and crying aloud, and went out, but without a word to him, into the garden and down to follow her son.

CHAPTER VI.

Miss Vaux was sitting in the long grass under a big paper mulberry, on the river's edge. The shadow was as dark as a tent over her and Dort, who stood beside her, and far above was the tenting sky, its still and vast folds shutting them in. A chance beam of light fell on her head, with its cap and tuft of scarlet feather. The river was a silent pathway of steel gray through the dusk; on its farther shore a boat with spectral sail tacked and jibed silently as a ghost. The dark figure of a crab-fisher, of which only the head and arms could be seen above the water, passed noiselessly along the shore, an unwieldy boat coming after, tied to his waist. He passed out of sight. The silence was absolute. There are no singing birds in these woods: no birds at all except dark, tiny sparrows, who hop along the sand without a twitter.

"It might be the shore of the Styx," said Miss Vaux, speaking with an effort. "And yonder is Charon's boat waiting for a passenger."

Dort made no reply.

"Look at the coloring on the bark of this

tree, Mr. Dort. Red, purple, saffron, every shade of the browns. One would think Nature had used it for her palette, or tried her brushes on it."

"Confound Nature and her palette!" said Mr. Dort inwardly. But his lips were inexorably shut.

"They ought soon to cut the sedge," she ventured, thirdly. "This is quite dry."

"What do I care for Charon or the sedge? Why do you talk in this way to me?"

"Because there is nothing else left for us to talk of," she answered steadily. "Because, one day more, and we will be strangers to each other for the remainder of our lives. It is safer that we should meet as strangers now."

"Romy!"

She rose as though against her will and stood beside him. He held out his hands to her.

"Yes, I know," she said, answering words which he did not speak, "I know what I am to you."

"But you—you. I am a clam-digger to you, that's all! A vulgar fellow that could amuse you for the time. Something curious, a little out of the common town-way, to be ranked with the sea-horse that you dried, or the plaice with both eyes on one side, eh?"

"You are unjust;" quietly. "I have told you that I love you."

"But what kind of love is it?" When she did not answer, he stood hot and fuming beside her, without speaking. In his secret soul he was ashamed of his rage at being thwarted. It seemed to him, as the dark tree shut them in, there was but this one living creature in all the world. It seemed as if, by a swift, hard insight, he saw for the first time clearly himself and his past life, his incompleteness, his uncontrolled temper, his ignorance, his conceit. All that he lacked waited for him in her. Mentally, if he reasoned about it, of course Romy was a weak, soft creature. Yet she had a curious effect upon him; the man he might be, which he never had thought of till she came, stood before him whenever he was by her side, clear and healthy and real as to-day's noon sunshine. Soft and weak though she might be, there was an invisible wall about her too, stronger than any

strength which he knew. He was parting from her, in all probability, forever; he was mad with passion to touch her; her babyish mouth, her thin, blue-veined hand, with the glove half off, her cloak, were but a hand's breadth from him, yet he could not put *his* finger on them. The line of invisible air might have been a gulf wide as death, so impassable was it. He spoke at last. She turned quickly.

"There is but one day more, and then you are gone. Do you know what it is that you leave me to? I wish I could tell you. I have no words like the men who are your companions." He stopped short. How could he show her that she was the only gleam from that outer world of refinement and culture which had ever come to him? He could not tell her that when she was gone he would sink back into Dick Dort, clam and oyster trader, with neither ideas nor ambitions beyond a lucky planting or a sharp sale. Was it best to tell any silly girl that she had such absolute power over a man's fate? He would have liked to assert the proper difference between man and woman; to be masterful, dominant; to beckon her toward him as the Sultan his favorite. But he found that, in fact, he did nothing of the kind; he only raged or complained. "You think of Duty. You have no thought for me," he said sullenly. In spite of his flash of humility, he felt that he was well worth thinking of. He was sure that there were very high places in the world waiting for himself, or men like him. "Give me a chance of calling you wife, Romy, and I will show you what I can make of myself."

Now, Miss Vaux had neither her father's love of talking, nor his facility of expression. Whenever she was driven to the wall and forced to speak, otherwise than by looks or smiles, her words were few, and not particularly well chosen.

"I never thought of what you would be. It's only what you are. You are so—so honest; and I have not always lived among honest people." Her dark blue eyes met his, but not steadily as usual. They were full of tears; she held out her hand, hoping he would take it. Romy had neither love nor petting at home; had never had them; she only, there-

fore, like most still, cold-mannered women, wanted them a little more than the rest of her sex.

But Dick drew back, biting his lips. "Don't touch me, unless you will come to me altogether."

"It is you who forbid me to come. I do love you. Why won't you believe that I love you, Richard?"

"How should I believe you? There is but one chance that you should become my wife, and that you refuse."

"It is not the only one."

"What can I do but adopt your mother's suggestion? I confess it did seem cowardly to me at first. But I see no other course."

"It is not cowardly only; it is base; it is—no matter; it is one which I will never accept. I will be no man's wife clandestinely."

"When I came to you to-night I thought your father might consent. But you—"

"I don't underrate the difficulty, as you did. He will not consent to-morrow, nor the next day, perhaps never."

"What would you have me do, then?"

"Go to him fairly. He is human, after all," she said, laughing. "He knows what love is. There never was loyaller lover than he to his wife. Let us wait. Love and patience and common sense can conquer anything in time."

"I do not see how you can talk cheerfully and be ready to joke about it," he said, clapping his hat on irritably.

"Life does not seem so tragic a matter to me, after all, Richard. There's no need of putting our love into the Ercles' vein. There is no danger of our growing old or gray-headed. What if we should wait a year or two?"

"I don't know what you mean by the Ercles' vein. I do know that you throw me off as you would a cast-off shoe, without a thought. I ask for no more than a legal hold on you, that I may claim you when the time comes."

Miss Vaux's blue eyes watched him with a quizzical laugh. "It is my father, I think, that you propose I should fling away like a worn-out shoe that had served his turn. Doesn't it occur to you that the nineteen years of love and service he has given me deserve that I

should not turn my back on him for a friend of three weeks' acquaintance without at least something of a decent apology? I am unromantic and prosaic, perhaps. I know you have all the poets and novelists on your side. But Richard," and then her voice broke, and she held out her hand again, "my love for you is the honestest and purest thing that ever came to me. Don't ask me to make it a sham and a lie. I can't eat my father's bread for years under a false name, plotting against him and tricking him, day and night. If that is all that is left to us, I'll go back to him; you can stay here."

With that the young lady turned and walked up the hill. If she had carried her head stiffly or set her feet down sharply like any other angry woman, Dick would have followed her and renewed the struggle. But she went on her way with as easy, soft tread as the day he met her first, the same genial, quizzical laugh on her pretty face. There was no means of knowing how much flint lay under that soft-tinted flesh and good humor. He let her go, and sat down doggedly on the ground, clasping his hands about his knees.

"It's all very well to jog cheerfully along through life in that way, or to preach that it will all come right if we do our duty in a humdrum honest way!" (which poor Romy had never preached, by the way.) "But there is pain and passion in the world of which you know nothing, Romaine Vaux," looking bitterly after her retreating figure, retreating more slowly when she found he did not follow her.

On the top of the hill she found her mother engaged in active conflict with a blackberry-bush that had caught her frizzy camels' hair trimming.

"I don't believe you'll ever get me loose in the world, Romy. And I have my stockings full of nettles besides. What's the matter, child? You've been crying. You did not consent to my plan? Oh, very well! You mean to break our hearts altogether?"

"It will not be so fatal matter as that, mother," looking up from her knees and the brambles; "give father time to see that we are in earnest, and he will consent."

"Never, Romaine Vaux! Never! You do not remember that Richard is a poor fish-

erman; it's very romantic, I know, but really that room is only a kitchen; one cannot disguise the fact."

"I remember when my father was a poor shoemaker, and I've seen our old room in Shanly Court," said Romy, quietly.

"Oh, very well! But don't talk of those old times; it's very unpleasant, and in bad taste—very bad! Your father is a gentleman now, and in affluence. He hasn't a settled income, to be sure, but the public.—Don't look in that way, Romy. Don't say you're tired of living off the public."

"I did not say so, mother," gently adjusting the cloak.

"It would be very improper if you had. It is not delicate in young girls to set themselves up as censors of their parents. Your father puts the case very aptly about the public and a donkey; I forget the simile, but it's very complete. But to go back. He never would allow you to leave the world of refinement and culture in which you live to come here."

"There may be such a world," said Romy, her soft cheek reddening, "but it's certain that we don't live in it. I'm tired of our miserable aping, and our paste jewelry, and gold that is washed brass. Oh, I am so tired!"

Mrs. Vaux looked at her in dismay. "I never wore washed brass in my life," she ejaculated solemnly to herself. "French gilt I may have —. Well, if you are tired of it," raising her voice, "why don't you escape from it? Why not marry my — this poor boy? He loves you, Romy, as nobody ever will again."

"Because I will not make life itself as much of a sham as the rest. Oh, mother, can't you see? Can nobody understand?"

"There, there, there!" stroking her head. "I understand all about it, but as for waiting for your father's consent,—do you know him, Romaine Vaux, that's all I ask—do you know him?"

Romy wiped her red eyes. "I know him as you do not, mother. I remember when I was a child in that room in Shanly Court, puny, cross, and sick. Father was police reporter for the *Times*. I remember when he would come in at one o'clock in the morning, worn out with the day's work, and sit in his

shirt-sleeves, time and again, rocking and singing to me till daylight. I do not forget that. I can't cheat him now."

"Oh, very well! The matter is decided. Go and bid good-bye to your crony, Mr. Inskip. I certainly have no desire to meet him again; I consider him intolerably rude! I will wait for you here." She sat down on the dry sedge. The moon had risen; its even, cold light grew cheerful and tender falling on the homely farm-house, the orchard, the bright river, with its incessant drowsy whisper to the shore. She drew a long breath of relief. "It certainly is better than the gaslight on the bricks, and the policeman eternally tramp, tramping up and down." It was a happy nest for her boy and Romy; but there he sat, sullen and despairing, on the river's brink. And there was Romy, going from him every moment. The two black figures drew farther apart, not to meet again. "And it is I that have done it!"

For a moment the ordinary bewilderment of scraps and tag-rag of thoughts cleared away from her brain, and she saw the truth face to face. If Major Vaux knew that Dort was her son, she secretly believed he would allow Romy to marry him. "The boy has pluck and business energy. He is a Dort, and the Major counts blood for so much!" she said to herself. The story would not be so terrible to tell, after all. She was but a school-girl of sixteen when she ran away with John Walt. They were legally married; she had the certificate still. It was her mother's plan to keep the silly marriage concealed until they were of age, but when Walt died, and her baby also, as they told her, it was her own, to let it

remain a secret.—"I had all mamma's skill in affairs," thought Fanny, complacently. Only a few years ago she had learned that her child still lived. "Oh, if I had only told him then!" she said. "But now—" yet even now it might give her boy a wife, place, name for life; it would take away the shame of his birth. "I have done nothing for him. Nothing! Surely I can do this little thing. The Major loves me. He'll forgive me. I will go to him to-night—now." She got up; there were none of the ready tears in her eyes; the real pain at her heart had dried them. She tied on her bonnet. When the icy fingers touched her chin—"I declare it's just like Death," she gasped. "Oh, I daren't! I daren't!" Was there no plan, nothing to take the place of this dragging open her whole treacherous life, as at the bar of judgment?

One good honest effort and all would be well.

"But dear, dear! a little clever bit of finesse serves one just as well, generally, as honesty," said Mrs. Vaux, even while she dragged herself slowly to the tent. "It always has me. Let me think; let me think!" Her steps grew slower and slower; whatever she did must be done at once. There was but to-morrow; after that, Dort was lost to her and Romy forever. She stopped, leaning against a tree. Suddenly the heat began to creep back to her flesh, the dingy color to her powdered cheeks; her eyes twinkled; she began to flirt her fan vigorously. "I have it! I have it!" she cried, and, turning, went hastily toward the tent; then, recollecting herself, sat down and patiently waited for Romy.

(To be continued.)

NATASQUA.

(Continued from page 169.)

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day proved cold and threatening. The nor'easter was rising steadily. The river and coast were deserted, the fishermen all having taken their schooners and surf-boats across to the bay, where an unprecedentedly large shoal of mackerel were running in. Only Dort remained. He had been coasting along shore in the Maid all day. The Maid was a light-built one-masted boat, sitting high out of the water, with that queer, prompt, knowing look which some boats have, even to landmen's eyes, as though by dint of long intercourse with living beings a kind of actual life had crept into them; not human precisely; more akin to the animal. To seafaring men this life is as tangible as their own. The Maid was no favorite on the coast. Dort had often been warned against her. Even old Inskip had cautioned him. "She's unlucky, Dick," he used to say. "She means mischief some day. Take that band of yaller paint off her; it looks like the ring about a copperhead's neck. It may be that. Though Ben Stolls says there was a man killed at her launchin down the bay, and the mark of the blood's on her bows. If that's the case there's no help for her."

In spite of their ominous croaking, however, the Maid had gone up and down the river for years, a faithful, pretty maid enough; and to-day, with her blood-red pennants fluttering apeak, a gayly dressed maid. Too gayly for the dull sad day, old Inskip thought, watch-

ing her, gaudy with yellow and red, darting to and fro through the wet mist, watching her dip until the angry water rushed in a torrent over her, and then saucily right herself. She was a painted Jezebel. It was an insolent toying with death. But the old man was full of sickly fancies to-day, and morbid. Dick and his Maid had river and sea to themselves. Not a boat was on the water. Not a step broke the silence of the marshes alongshore, up which the tide crept in black snake-like lines. The hills stood apart and solitary, like half-effaced sketches in India ink upon the unhealthy yellow sky. On summer days the Natasqua carried some secret,—Life or Content or Cheerfulness among them; one hardly could give it a name, but certain it is the Natasqua was alive with it, as some priestess of old with the electric current. It was in the air, in the wash of the waves, in the dart of the sword-fishes up into the light, in the lady-bugs dotting the swamp-grass like drops of blood, in the pulpy, green, luminous sand-flies creeping here and there. But the secret was lost or out of sight to-day; a breathless foreboding kept the world silent; the Natasqua was but a dull wash of muddy water which wrapped in fog oozed its way out into the ocean.

Dort had gone down in the direction of the tents early in the morning, and met Miss Vaux on the sands, and after exchanging a few words with her, had returned to the Maid and remained in her all day, coasting up and down.

Inskip, venturing down once, found the young fellow silent and flushed, as though keeping some strong excitement out of sight.

"Goin' to the bay, Richard?"

"No. Miss Vaux is going with me down to the inlet this afternoon," he said. "She has never seen the sea under a nor'easter at spring tide."

"It will be your last sail with her, my boy, eh?" said the old man gently.

Dick gave a queer discordant laugh, but answered 'nothing. When Inskip was gone, he took out a letter to read again for the twentieth time. It had been brought to him late the night before, and was from Mrs. Vaux, marked "Immediate" and "Private," and full of underscoring and exclamation points.

It began without any address, which Dort did not observe, however. There were other peculiarities in it, too, which he did not notice.

"I wish to help you," she said; "why, I may tell you some day. Not now. But as God sees me, there is nothing I would not do to give you fortune and happiness. You have parted with Romaine, as you think, forever. That is all boyish heat and folly. Put the affair in my hands. She urges you to speak openly to her father, which is also mere purblind folly. You children are always blunt and headlong. A disclosure to Major Vaux of your love, and of some other matters which must be ripped open at the same time, seems to me premature and unwise. My plan is this. Ask Romy to go with you to-morrow in your boat to the sea or the other shore—anywhere. It will be exceedingly silly in her to do it, as she wishes to draw away from you: but she will go. She is a woman, and loves you. When you are at the other shore, out of reach of help, scuttle your boat, overturn, shipwreck her; you are a sailor and can understand what I mean, and manage it adroitly; let Romy believe herself in danger, and that your strong arm and strong love saved her. Weak and frightened, and out of reach of home, you can persuade her to what you will. Take her to the nearest clergyman, and bring her back as your wife. The deed once done, she will see the expediency of keeping it a secret. We will return to New York; you can push your fortune, sure of a legal

hold upon her whenever you are ready to claim her. We will have won the game from the Major. If she is obstinate, and persists in testing her father's affection for her by a confession—the worst can only come to the worst. We will stand just where we do to-day. He shall know all." There were some half-illegible and wholly incomprehensible sentences at the close, expressive of her wish to serve him, of her regard for him "different from that of any mother." Dick passed them over with a careless glance as a bit of silly sentiment; though the poor little woman, false and cunning in every other line of the letter, had poured her whole aching heart into these.

Now Dick, to be just, had inherited none of his mother's trickiness. But the savage disappointment of the day before, the feverish sleepless night, the day itself, significant of loss and disaster, drove him to an unwonted irritability and despair. To give her up was to give up life itself. There were but a few hours in which to decide his whole fortune. On one side was Romy's plan, to risk all on honesty, which to Dort, as to his mother, seemed purblind folly,—truckling to the Major first, and afterward long years of hopeless waiting. On the other was this trick of Mrs. Vaux. It suited Dick's mood, somehow. To capture the girl by force, as it were—ha! that had the ring of the old masculine metal line in it! To undermine this pompous old idiot! So true love and simple worth should always triumph over the world and fashion. Dick had some such vague notions as these, but the motive that drove him most fiercely, certainly, was that he loved the girl, and caught at the readiest means to possess himself of her.

The first part of Mrs. Vaux's programme proved successful. Romy, who had spent the night in bidding lover and love good-bye forever, and teaching herself that the fragment of life left to her must be passed in tearing the thought of him out of her heart, no sooner saw him coming up the beach than she promptly sat down to gather pebbles and give him time to reach her.

"You will go down in the Maid this evening to see the spring tide, Romy?"

"Yes, Richard," humbly.

"It is the last day. Let us have one hour of happiness more to remember."

"Yes, Richard."

That was all. As Dort, replacing his cap, turned off to the beach, the Major and Mrs. Vaux came up. "Your boatman coming for a last job, my dear? Unprofitable jobs enough, so far. I must really think of some remuneration for the fellow. Adolph has some household utensils, probably, not worth expressing home, that we can give him."

"I will see to it," said Mrs. Vaux.

But the Major was looking after Dick through his eye-glass. "The most remarkable!—that young man has a curious likeness to some one, my dear, with whom I am familiar. But I cannot fix it, for my life. The carriage—the poise of the head—the very voice! It is really unaccountable how these chance likenesses annoy us when we cannot fix them."

"Had you not better look after the packing of the wine?" said his wife hastily.

"Oh true, true! By the way, where is Romy going this afternoon?"

"To see the spring tide come in, I believe."

"A capital idea! It will be a sight worth seeing with this nor'easter gust. I can make a letter out of it for the *Journal*, no doubt. Land and sea furnish us with pot-boilers, you see, my dear. You shall go with me to the beach, Fanny. Not a word—not a word. You shall see everything that is worth seeing in the world, my child; you should have everything worth having in it, if Joe Vaux had the money."

He put his hand on her head, fondly. That was more than Mrs. Vaux could bear. She hurried off from him, her conscience rasping her sorely, and the tears with which she always paid all her debts to conscience, and washed out the accounts, ready in her eyes. A sigh heaved the Major's breast as he looked after her. "I wish to the Lord I had more money for the little woman. If she and the young ones were at the top of the tree, Joe Vaux would be satisfied with his work."

A strange silence fell over sea and land as

the day passed noon. The leaden, sunless plane overhead hung low and motionless; cold mists swept steadily from the sea inland; the Natasqua rose and fell in short, sullen throbs; the only sound that broke the gray cold and silence was the melancholy pipe of the fish-hawk, coming home through the sky from its bootless search after prey.

When the *Maid*, still jaunty in her yellow and red, grated up on the sand, Romy was ready to spring on board; her rosy, happy face peeping out from her hooded waterproof cloak. Mrs. Vaux, in the distance, watched Dick, his broad figure made stouter by cavalry boots and a heavily-caped overcoat, help her up, and then take his seat at the stern, and, rudder in hand, steer out into the impenetrable gray mist.

"He is weighted down with those clothes," she cried. "What can he do in a struggle in the water? And the day looks death! it smells of death." She ran down to the water's edge. What if they never came back out of that mist and silence? It was she who had driven them to it. She crept out after the retreating wave until her feet sank in the slimy froth and kelp, calling shrilly to them; but the sound struck dead against the heavy air, and nothing but the echo of her own voice came to her again.

Wrapping her shawl tighter about her, she turned and ran on in the direction in which she knew the inlet to lie. Chance might bring her to the point where they would land. She must see the end of her scheme, whether it was death or life; and, besides, she would avoid her husband, whom she hoped to trick by it. She would go mad if she were forced to parade arm-in-arm with him to-day, and listen to his pompous, never-ending courtship.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THIS wind is as cold as if it blew out of the grave," said Dick, looking around gloomily. "Nothing but disaster could come on such a day."

"It is a little chilly, to be sure. But it's a very comfortable day." Romy gave a contented little gurgle of a laugh, and snuggled closer under her cloak. Dick had made her sit by him in the stern, and while he guided

the rudder with one hand, used the other very often to adjust her hood. Romy was quite willing that he should adjust her hood. Her cheeks grew pinker, and her eyes flashed when she felt his awkward fingers outside of the rough cloth. She had never been so babyish or happy with him. As for her last night's forebodings and struggles with Duty, she did not know what had become of them. Dick would talk to her father, or wait and work for her in silence. Wait a day—a week—years. What did that matter? Some day it would come! Now—wasn't she beside him? Could she not feel him touch her cloak? The touch of the rough fellow's hand meant love, pure, faithful; he glanced at her, and presto! with the glance all of her life to come was pressed to her lips in one draught, warm, bright, tender, maddening with its hopes. Dort was anxious and moody, but she saw nothing of that, except to think how fine the pale, square-jawed face was under the broad-brimmed hat; finer than Dick's usual good-natured visage, with the cap set knowingly atop.

As for Dick, he steered aimlessly up and down. The time was creeping fast, but he was palsied with doubt. If he took her back to the tents she was lost to him; and yet Mrs. Vaux's scheme now seemed beyond measure mean and paltry. Then he looked down into her honest blue eyes, and stooped to shelter her from the wind. She bent unconsciously toward him.

"O God, I cannot give her up," he cried bitterly, and steered sharply out toward the inlet. There was an old clergyman living near the beach who would marry them and ask no questions. He would not need to use Mrs. Vaux's cowardly stratagem. Romy had never been so womanish, so yielding as to-day. Let him have but an hour and he could bring her to him by sheer love.

"It grows late," she said, with a startled glance at the darkening sky.

"Do you want to go home?" urging the boat toward the inlet.

She shook her head with a shy blush and laugh.

"Do you care to think of the time when we shall always sit thus side by side?" Dort whispered, stooping nearer to her; "when

you will be my wife, Romy? Do you ever think of it?"

The pretty little face under the cloak grew redder and brighter. "Indeed, I think of it all the time, Richard," she said frankly. "It won't be so very long till then, either."

"What do you mean?" hastily.

"Oh, with your talents, you will soon be ready to make your way and come for me," with a decisive little nod. "I'm so glad," clasping her hands earnestly, "so glad that you gave up that scheme promptly, Richard, and have done with it. Whenever I think of my love for you, or my marrying you, it is as if we were both going near to God, and I could not go to Him with a trick and a lie in my mouth. Could I?"

"Oh, certainly not. What devil is in this boat?" rising with a purple face. "I beg your pardon. But I never knew her take her own head so before. I cannot steer her." He talked fast to cover her agitation. "She follows my touch generally like a tame filly. But to-day, one would believe, as the fishermen say, that she had an ugly life of her own that will have its own way."

"I don't see anything malignant in the poor *Maid*," looking indifferently up at the sail, and wishing Dick would sit down beside her again. He did sit down presently, but remained gloomily silent. His hand tightened on the rudder like iron, steering straight for the inlet. He would not take her back until she was his wife, by fair means or foul, let her say what she would. All the strength and passion of Dort's nature were roused for the first time in his life. She was a weak woman, and in his hold. *She would not slip out of it.* As for this goodyish honesty she talked about, it was well enough for women. He did not concern himself much with God or the devil just now; it was her he wanted. He looked at her, trying to master the magic word that should bring her to him, regardless of the vindictive lurches and jibes of the boat under his hand. They frightened Romy at last.

"Hadn't we better go back to shore? You have no control of the boat, Richard."

"There's something about her I don't understand," with an impatient jerk of the rudder.

"I thought I knew her thoroughly. No, we will not go back. I am going to take you to the inlet." They had drifted within a few feet of the shore, but Dort forced the boat out into the broad sheet of gray water between them and the sea.

"Oh, very well," laughed Romy, wiping off the salt mist that wet her face. "You won't take me anywhere that is not safe for me, I'm sure." It was a summer day to her, and she was sailing on to the enchanted isles.

Dort was silent. The *Maid* pushed her way headlong through the water as though she relished the evil errand. In an hour the marshy shore was out of sight, and the sea-beach stretched before them wan and threatening in the mist.

"How lonely it is! We have not met a boat on the river," she said.

Dick fastened the rudder, and sat down beside her. "There is not a living being within miles of us. Are you afraid?"

She looked quickly at the colorless sky, the dim shore, the vast moaning sea stretching to the horizon. "I am not afraid with you," she said, a little pale but smiling.

He stooped down suddenly, drew the hood from her head, and taking it between his hands turned her face toward his own, looking into her eyes. "Are you glad to leave the world behind us? To be alone with me? Do you love me?"

Red heats dyed her face; he gave her no space for answer, but drew her close, stroked her eyes with his fingers softly, and then for the first time in her life pressed his lips to hers. Then he held her still and firmly in his arms. "You shall never go back from me to the world," he said quietly. "I intend to land on yonder beach, and in an hour you will be my wife."

On the instant she was free from him, and standing erect and apart. "Do you mean what you say, Richard?"

"Yes. I will not live without you."

She shook her head. "You should not have cheated me. You will take me back now, home." She hesitated a minute and then came directly toward him and sat down again gravely. Dort's eyes blazed on her, baffled and fierce with passion. Hers met them, blue,

cool, smiling. The childish, yielding Romy of an hour ago had vanished utterly. He held out his hands, came toward her, and then turned away. He could not touch her.

"You will take me home, Richard, I am sure," she said quietly. "You will not make me think you a trickster. I know you better."

"God knows what I am," broke out poor Dick desperately. If he had known what a terrified chicken-heart was beating for life under Romy's cloak, he would not have been so easily worsted. Should he give her up? He stooped to unloose the rudder when an odd gurgle under the boat struck his ear. He tore off the flat top of the forecastle, looked into it, turned with a quick catching of his breath, measuring the distance between the boat and the shore.

"What is it? Oh Richard, what is it?"

"I cannot take you home if I would, Romy," quietly. "The *Maid* has sprung a leak. I suppose," with a laugh, "she was jealous of the woman I loved and revenges herself in this way." A woman might daunt Dort, but danger brought him at a touch back to his cool self. He was busy on his knees while he spoke, probing the leak.

Miss Vaux, on the contrary, screamed with terror: "Take me home, Richard," catching his arms so that he could do nothing. "Must we die? I don't want to die. Take me anywhere, anywhere!"

"I'll do what I can," pulling off his boots and coat. "Don't hold my arms, my darling." He spoke very gently, for he felt that the chance for them was over. The boat was unmanageable; they were drifting rapidly out to sea.

CHAPTER IX.

THE Major and Mrs. Vaux were pacing about the beach, arm in arm. He had followed and found her as she feared.

"But why should you remain in this very unpleasant atmosphere, Fanny?" The Major buttoned his oil-skin coat tighter about his breast. "Romy, you tell me, designed to return early. You have therefore no uneasiness about her?"

"Oh, certainly not," clinging to his arm, and dragging him up and down the sands,

while with agonized eyes she tried to pierce the blinding mist.

The Major submitted to be dragged, puffing like a porpoise. "I'm very glad I met you, very glad. But—it is the view you admire, my dear?"

"Yes, it is the view."

He took out his eye-glasses and thoughtfully poised them on his nose. "It might be objected to as wet. But I have not that keen appreciation of nature that you have. I wish I had. A bit of scenery comes in well in a letter. Newcastle has that appreciation. That is a remarkable boy. Do you know, my dear, Newcastle is a better solicitor for advertisements to-day than I am?"

"Impossible, Major."

"True, 'pon my honor. As for the women in business, they dote on him. Such a handsome dog, and so cursedly religious! Well—" shivering, "you don't want to go home?"

"Not yet. One moment. What is that black speck yonder?"

"A log coming in with the tide. Nature, eh?" looking into the vast waste of water beyond the stretch of pallid beach; a shadow of what might have been thoughtfulness in another man coming into his boastful face. "Do you know, Fanny, there really seems to be something in this? I don't quite grasp it, but—. I've always said, when I had the boys settled I'd turn my attention to—well, religion, you know—and I really think I would come to a place like this to do it. There's a meaning—a—. I suppose the geologists get at it with their hammers, or you poets. You are a poet; you write verses, eh, my dear?" fondly regarding her rasped, meagre visage, and complacently pulling his whiskers.

She shook her head, her eyes straining on the black log that rose and fell, rose and fell with the muddy breakers, and slowly came nearer shore.

"No? Now I would have suspected it strongly. You have that expression, rapt, spirituelle—. But as for this Nature. I don't know what's in it, I'm sure. How's a man to find out what's in anything, that isn't advertised? Tut! tut! it's only my joke; smells a little of the shop, eh?"

But Mrs. Vaux dragged him down to the

water's edge. "The log! the log!" she cried, hoarsely.

"Log? what? Merciful God! It's a body! Fanny, it's a body!"

The next wave dashed its helpless burden so near to the shore that the Major, who had rushed in headlong, dragged it out. "Romy! Romy!" he sobbed breathless, untying her from the mast to which she was fastened, tearing off the cloak and placing his ear to her breast. He heard a faint throb. "Great God, I thank Thee," he said under his breath, holding her tight in his arms, as when she was a baby.

But Mrs. Vaux stood by, staring beyond them to the sea. "It was I that sent him," she said to herself, again and again. "It was I that sent him."

The color came to Miss Vaux's lips. "Is he dead, father?" struggling to her feet. "Is he dead?"

"Who is it? The young man Dort? Where is he, my child?"

"He swam with me to shore, and when his strength was gone tied me to a bit of mast that floated past. He is dead now."

"God bless my soul, I hope not! I'll see what can be done. Swam with you to shore, eh? Unbuckle this strap, Fanny," tearing off his coat and purple waistcoat.

"You shall not go, father. You shall not! Not even for him," cried Romy, her arms about him. But the Major was a man, and made short work with women. "Stand out of the way," as he jerked off his boots and socks. "I see him yonder, not twenty yards. I used to swim like a fish. I wouldn't see a dog die and stand by with my hands in my pockets." Now that he was doing a man's work, the Major was altogether simple and natural. He plunged into the water puffing, striking out with arms and legs valiantly. For the fat, short-breathed man to match himself against the sea was simply suicide. Romy, up to her neck in the water, clung to him, but he shook her off laughing and sputtering. She crept back to shore and stood with her back to the sea. Mrs. Vaux looked after him with dull, vacuous eyes. As the water covered him she tried to speak. "Don't let him go, Romy! I—I played this trick on him to-day."

But beyond the farthest breaker the Major had gallantly made his way, and there the gray mist fell and she saw no more.

While the two women waited on the shore, a man's heavy tread sounded on the beach, and old Inskip came out of the fog to them. He stood without a word, looking out to sea. Mrs. Vaux, in all her pain, had time to think that he was like an unfeeling log.

"There are two men yonder," he said presently, pointing out into the mist. "One is my boy; the other—"

"It is my husband."

Inskip made ready to help them, when the next wave should bring them up. He was an old man, and feeble, but he moved in the water like a fish. He went out carrying a rope which he had tied to a spar buried in the sand. Romy brought the mast to which she had been lashed. "Can you use it?" she said.

"It is from the *Maid*," pushing it aside with a shudder.

In a few moments he came in, dragging two bodies up on the sand. Both were as still and dead as the log by which they lay. The women worked with them as well as he, but what could they do? Inskip was strong and skillful. Presently Dort gave signs of life. At his first breath Inskip turned his muddy face up, and for the first time since Dick was a baby kissed him on the lips, and then the old man was seized with a great shuddering, so that he could hardly rub the men as he ought.

Mrs. Vaux held the Major's head on her lap, stroking the eyebrows and whiskers which the salt water had washed clear of dye and left white. "He is dead, and I loved him so! I loved him so!" she cried. She had forgotten to look at her son.

They worked with him a long time. Dick, weak as he was, crept over and did what he could. He had no thought to spare even for Romy, so intent was he in watching the Major's face. "Will he live?" he said to Inskip apart. "He was but a short time in the water."

"No, he wa'n't but a short time in the water, but ther's a beam or some'at struck him in the

side; the hurt's inward. I'm afraid ther's no chance, Richard."

"He gave his life for me, and I was tricking him! O God!"

Inskip nodded gravely and worked on in silence. He believed God had dealt this blow direct on Dick and his mother. "It'll make a different man of him for life," he thought. He looked, now and again, over the inanimate body at the angry sea, the ominous sky and earth. To his uneducated and half-Pagan fancy, they were alive and vengeful. It was not the poor Major, bravely dying, on whom their punishment had fallen, but the living trickster bending over him. For Inskip had stumbled on the great truth that he who would truly know Love or Nature must come to them as into the presence of God, with bare face and clean hands and lips that would not lie.

The Major breathed at last. But his mind was not clear. When his wife and daughter bent close to hear they found he was laughing. "Newcastle," he said, and afterwards—"The public's a donkey, Langton, and we—we lead—" Then he was silent. Presently he opened his eyes. They were clear and intelligent. "I am wet," he said. He took in with a glance his wife's face, the sea, the men kneeling over him. "Is this death?" looking quickly at Dort.

Dick raised him, his face as ghastly as the dying man's. "I fear it is, sir."

"Humph!" He did not speak for a little while. "Vaux and sons—that's all done—done. Fanny!"

"I am here."

"If this is so," with an effort painful to see—"put on my gravestone, Joseph Fox. Fox. I took the name of Vaux. I thought it would be genteeler for the boys and Romy. But I'd like to be buried under my own."

"Oh, father! father!"

"Romy"—fumbling at the cold hand in his—"you're a good girl, Romy. It is this stitch in my side, that—Fanny! Don't leave me, Fanny."

"I will not leave you."

The Major nodded, contented, once or twice, and looking steadily into the poor shallow face that had been so dear to him, he

drew a quick breath or two, and then all was still.

The sun, which had been hidden all day, broke out from behind the cloud, and threw a sudden illumination over sea and land. Its red beams touched the poor dead body, as if God had stretched out loving hands and claimed something in it as His own. Old Inskip, laying it straight upon the sand, looked

up to the glowing crimson glory and the dark blue sea below, to the soft crisp foam upon the beach, to the two figures standing apart, lovers for all time. It seemed to him as if the world was full of God's truth and love ; as if every meanest of His creatures had its share in both.

"This too !" he said, laying his trembling hand on the poor Major's breast. "This too."

THE END.
